

AUTHENTIC FAITH AND REFLECTIVE CLARITY:
THE ROLE OF RELIGIOUS LANGUAGE
IN PASTORAL COUNSELING

by
Robert Milligan Stevenson

A dissertation
submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree
Doctor of Philosophy
School of Theology at Claremont
May 1980

This dissertation, written by

Robert Milligan Stevenson

*under the direction of his Faculty Committee,
and approved by its members, has been presented
to and accepted by the Faculty of the School of
Theology at Claremont in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of*

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Faculty Committee

Allen J. Moore
Chairman

Paul Schuman

David Griffin (for John Cobb)

Date April 17, 1980

David Griffin

To My Mother and Father

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Many people, most of whose names go unrecorded here, have enabled my writing. I name only a few.

Schubert Ogden, to whom I have owed a paper for over seventeen years, modeled the joining of passionate commitment and reflective clarity which I have envisioned as the outcome of pastoral counseling.

I thank my committee for their helpful and even-handed guidance and support: Allen Moore set deadlines and asked the right questions. John Cobb was gracious with his time, his detailed responses, and his willingness to shepherd another's theological position. Paul Schurman's friendship and counsel helped in this project as it has in many other of my life's projects.

Gary, Helga, and Carol were willing to share major portions of their lives, not only with me, but also with my readers.

I thank my children for their sagacious parenting, their perceptive adulthood, and their insistent invitations to come out and play.

To Janet, my wife, I am thankful for a shared dream and long hours of hard work.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	page
I. INTRODUCTION. . . . .	.1
Purpose of the Study. . . . .	.1
Value of the Study.	10
Definitions	11
Pastoral Counseling	11
Insight Counseling.	11
Religious Concerns.	13
Theistic Language	14
Authentic Faith	14
Reflective Clarity.	14
Secular Thinking.	14
Limitation of the Study	15
II. FAITH, SECULARITY, AND THE COUNSELING PROCESS	17
Secular Faith and the Transcendence of God.	17
The Contemporary Problem in Pastoral Counseling.	17
God and Secularity.	28
Human Existence and the Transcendence of God.	42
Alienation.	49
Revelation.	51
III. THEOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF THE COUNSELING PROCESS	59
Oden on Counseling.	59
Faith and the Counselor	60
Faith and the Counselee	66
The Undelivered Message	69
Christology and Counseling.	70
Basic Christological Issues	74
Ogden's Critique of Bultmann.	74
Original and Special Revelation	86
IV. CLINICAL EXAMPLES	102
Case Study #1	102
Psychological Interpretation.	116
Theological Analysis.	122

Case Study #2 . . . . .	.128
Psychological Interpretation. . . . .	.135
Theological Analysis. . . . .	.137
Discussion of Case Studies. . . . .	.138
Clinical Function of Language of Reassurance . . . . .	.138
Reflective Clarity and Religious Language: A Comparison. . . . .	.144
V. IMPLICATIONS FOR PASTORAL COUNSELING. . . . .	.154
Autonomy, Heteronomy, and Theonomy. . . . .	.157
The Style of Theological Reflection in Counseling . . . . .	.160
VI. CONCLUSION. . . . .	.166
BIBLIOGRAPHY. . . . .	.168

ABSTRACT

This study is an inquiry into the function of theological language in pastoral counseling, as informed by contemporary secular thinking. A major premise is that pastoral counseling has tended to accept a secular definition of the human problem as alienation from self and others and, hence, has defined its task in light of that definition. While ignoring alienation from God as a problem transcending intrapersonal and interpersonal alienation, pastoral counseling has failed to comprehend in an adequate fashion its function as participating in the process of overcoming alienation from God and making Christian faith effective.

The thesis of the study is that while insight counseling as such is a thoroughly religious enterprise, i.e., an attempt to represent the ground of confidence in life's worth and meaning, the reflective clarity required of that process is only possible through appropriate theological analysis, since, in fact, that confidence is grounded in God's love.

After the introduction of the problem of the use of theological language in counseling, chapter two describes Ogden's critique of secular faith and its implicit transcendent ground. This analysis has been employed to provide a redefinition of insight counseling as religious quest.

Chapter three employs Ogden's doctrine of revelation to resolve inconsistencies in Oden's theological critique of the counseling process. Existential, authentic faith is distinguished from reflective clarity providing for the recognition of genuine revelatory possibilities in secular counseling apart from reflective clarity.

In chapter four two cases are presented which illustrate the function of reflective clarity and the style of theological reflection which honors the traditional secular regard for the autonomy of the individual.

Chapter five summarizes some implications for the use of theological language in counseling and chapter six briefly summarizes the argument.

Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

Purpose of the Study

The process of pastoral counseling has traditionally focused on the events of peoples' lives. There is a narrative quality to most of what transpires between counselee and counselor. Events, feelings, fantasies--what happened, what is happening, what may happen--that is the stuff of pastoral counseling. There is usually little to be found there of the stories, concepts and symbols that in other contexts we as pastoral counselors have judged to be so important--the language of Christian faith.

Whatever the precise admixture of God-talk or its lack in pastoral counseling, its relative absence raises significant issues.

What are the norms for the kind of language we use, as pastoral counselors? Such norms are obviously related to the goals of pastoral counseling. Since Protestant pastoral counseling, as developed in this century, has attempted to function as a bridge between traditional Christian concerns and contemporary secular healing practices, the issue of relevant norms has been complex.

The problem of the language of pastoral counseling simply focuses the larger problem of honoring both the claims of the modern world and the Christian faith. Given this con-

flict, it has been all too easy to adopt a position that ignores one or the other of these claims.

For instance, Thornton has described the common view that theology is irrelevant to pastoral counseling:

. . . pastors say they want practical rather than theoretical instruction. . . . They feel that counseling is fully acceptable as a method of pastoral work. It does not need to be justified theologically, if it works.¹

Apparently, not only pastors, but people who come for pastoral counseling care little about theological issues, if a recent study has broad applicability:

The present study failed to find any clear evidence that many lay people believe that counseling offered at a pastoral counseling center differs from that offered by other sources of therapy.

[assuming the representativeness of this study] The counselor's understanding of his/her role affects the therapy relationship; however, it is not of primary interest to the person who comes for counseling.²

While it might be argued that these results are contradicted by Hiltner and Colston's widely read earlier study,³ closer examination shows this not to be the case. The hypothesis of this study was:

¹ Edward E. Thornton, Theology and Pastoral Care (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1964), p. 15.

² Emil J. Pasovac and Bruce M. Hartung, "An Exploration Into the Reasons People Choose a Pastoral Counselor Instead of Another Type of Psychotherapist," Journal of Pastoral Care, XXXI, 1 (March 1977), 38-46.

³ Seward Hiltner and Lowell G. Colston, The Context of Pastoral Care (New York: Abingdon Press, 1961).

that people seeking counseling help from a pastor, when other conditions are approximately equal, will tend to progress slightly farther and faster in the same amount of time than they will in another setting. . . .⁴

The results of that study, which only approached statistical significance in confirmation of this hypothesis, do not contradict the new study. The possible differential effects of counseling through a pastoral counseling center are not, necessarily, a result of the expectations of people coming to such a center. Further, the results of the study leave it a problematic issue whether, in fact, such expectation exists--even in the two centers studied.

Indeed, the authors hypothesize that an element comprising the "context" of pastoral counseling is the "expectation" of the counselee.⁵ However, this purported dimension of the context was not tested.

Apart from the data given in the individual cases, we have not studied the factors that bring someone to the pastor rather than to another helper.⁶

Certainly, the unexamined hunch that I, too, share, is a generally positive expectation on the part of many counselees, who report preferring pastoral counseling centers to secular institutions or helpers. However, while an element of the client's decision may be more directly related to traditional religious concerns, another important factor is the lower fee scale usually charged in pastoral counseling centers.

⁴ Ibid., p. 21.

⁵ Ibid., pp. 29-37.

⁶ Ibid., p. 197.

Pastoral counselors may attribute a secondary function to theological language. First, theological language can be an aid to furthering communication and developing trust when the pastoral counselor uses it with committed Christians. As we will see illustrated in the first of the two case studies to follow, recognizable Christian identity, established through language or setting may be reassuring to certain counselees.

Second, it may provide the special language system some people need to accept certain moral injunctions the counselor suggests and/or the counselee reluctantly wants to accept. I simply have in mind expressions like, "Well, you know the Bible says we should love our neighbor as ourselves, so we should love ourselves, too." Such an example, I suggest, while having possible positive benefits, amounts to the trivialization of the role of theological language.

Pastoral counseling has resisted the intrusion of language having no integral or essential function. It has also traditionally defended the autonomous process of the counselee, over against any heteronomous intrusion of the values and belief systems of the pastoral counselor or of the ecclesiastical communities to which either the pastoral counselor or counselee belong.⁷ Taking responsibility for

⁷
For example, "The pastor does not coerce, moralize, push, divert, or direct. Instead he attempts to lead out or draw out resources and strengths which can become operative only as they are helped to well up within the parishioner." Seward Hiltner, The Counselor in Counseling (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1950), p. 10.

one's own life has been a normative value for pastoral, as well as secular counseling. In Tillich's terms, counseling has largely been a struggle for defense of an autonomous reason, in the face of a perceived threat of heteronomy,⁸ whether familial, ecclesiastical, or cultural. Therefore, how can theological reflections avoid being a heteronomous intrusion?

On the other hand, academic theologians tend to suspect the theological credentials of the therapeutic process in pastoral counseling. Falling under the rubric of the "Arts of Ministry" here at the School of Theology at Claremont, there seems to be widespread doubt not about the "artfulness" of pastoral counseling, but whether, indeed, it is an art of ministry, linked in a substantive way to the church's calling and ongoing reality. This criticism goes further than the traditional academic disdain of "purely practical" matters; there seems to be serious question, whether "practical" or "theoretical," pastoral counseling is theological. Cobb has said:

. . . the practice of counseling by pastors should be seen not only as one expression of Christian concern to respond to human needs in general but also as a part of the distinctive pastoral work of making Christian faith effective in the lives of people. Here lies the chal-

8

Paul Tillich, Systematic Theology (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951-1963), I and III, esp. I, 147-50; III, 249-68.

lenge. Can pastors bring their faith to bear on the goals, methods, and resources of counseling? Is there a type of counseling that is given distinctive shape and direction not only by the pastor's socially defined role but also by Christian understanding of God and the world?⁹

There is ample question whether pastoral counseling, as presently constituted, has any role in making Christian faith effective.

In brief, the response to the concern about heteronomy will be illustrated from Oden's analysis of certain secular therapies, showing that transcendent dimensions of reality are integral elements of counseling, whether or not concerns for and valuation of the transcendent dimensions are identified and valued self-consciously by therapist or counselee.

In simplest terms, the reason God-talk is, under specific conditions, appropriate to counseling, is that God-issues are being dealt with in counseling, either overtly or covertly. Clarity about those issues on the part of both counselor and counselee can only advance the counseling process, even if the advance carries the process beyond traditional concerns of much secular counseling.

I intend to argue that faith, on a certain important level, can result from secular counseling or from pastoral counseling, with its characteristic secular stance. This I take to be the case even though pastoral counselors themselves have failed to recognize that process as a faith struggle.

Second, I intend to argue that that faith is decisively clarified by the Christian witness to God as revealed in Jesus Christ and that such clarity on the part of that counselee may serve a vital function that carries forward clinical concerns.

In sum, the thesis of this study is that while insight counseling as such is a thoroughly religious enterprise, yielding the possibility of authentic faith, the adequate and appropriate reflective clarity which may fulfil and undergird that process is possible only through appropriate theological analysis.

This possibility of authentic faith will be shown to be based in the nature of God's ever present love and insight counseling's concern with the worth and meaning of our lives. Authentic faith is the existential trust of God's love, which, as will be seen, is an everpresent human possibility. As such, it is a possibility in insight counseling wherein the question of ultimate trust and confidence is

raised. Christian faith will be described as that authentic faith or trust in God's love as informed by and given reflective clarity in the church's witness to Jesus Christ.

Since pastoral counseling is an enterprise in which the church has attempted to learn from and appropriate secular wisdom, I have chosen to carry forward this discussion through two theologians who have done significant work in the theological appropriation of and confrontation with our secular world.

First, Schubert M. Ogden has made an unquestioned contribution to the understanding of the problem of faith in the post-modern world. One premise of this study is that his unique blending of existential analysis and process thought provides an appropriate and adequate basis for the understanding of the relationship of faith to counseling.

Second, Thomas C. Oden has been not only the most prolific but also one of the most influential theologians in the field of pastoral counseling. He was introduced to the plenary session of the 1979 annual meeting of the American Association of Pastoral Counselors as the person thought of first when pastoral counselors think of theology's relationship to pastoral counseling. His writings have examined the theological elements of varied approaches to counseling, including client-centered therapy, the encounter movement, and transactional analysis, among others.

It will be argued that Oden has made a significant contribution to the clarification of religious issues in the counseling process and that limitations in Oden's analysis may be corrected by application of Ogden's evaluation of the relationship between faith and the secular world in general to counseling situations in particular. While the emphasis here will be on the concerns of pastoral counseling, it should be noted that this analysis has implications for the broader field of secular counseling. To wit, "secular" counselors, too, might benefit from the clarification of religious dimensions of the counseling process and the implicit value to counselee and counselor as well, of the reflective clarity about these issues. Indeed, since existential questions of life's worth and meaning play such a vital part in the lives of persons coming for assistance, counseling generally, in all its manifest forms, is an eminently religious enterprise.

The argument of the study will be developed as follows: since religious language is generally understood to be reflection about God, the second chapter shall outline Ogden's understanding of God with particular reference to issues raised by the secular culture to which Protestant pastoral counseling has been so closely related. The third chapter will address the issue of how God is revealed in the counseling process. Here, Ogden's theology will be employed to resolve a fundamental inconsistency in Oden's

interpretation of how God is revealed in counseling and to specify the function of religious language. Chapter four will provide case material reflecting contrasting possibilities for understanding the nature of the reflective clarity and religious language in the counseling process. Chapter five explores the parameters of the use of religious and more specifically, theistic, language and practical implications for pastoral counseling. Chapter six will briefly summarize the conclusions of the study.

Value of the Study

Bridging the chasm described above is not a new enterprise. In a sense, it is the project of the church addressing the social sciences. Moore has described the issue in the following terms:

Can an identity for ministry be formulated that is both theological and scientific, historical and contemporary? . . . What is now needed are models that will integrate these contemporary influences with the traditions and doctrines of the Christian heritage.¹⁰

The integration at stake here is comprised of the adjudication of historically conflicting value claims arising from normative concepts of counseling and proclamation respectively, as they bear on the issue of theological discourse and its

10

Allen J. Moore, "The Place of Scientific Models and Theological Reflection in the Practice of Ministry," faculty lecture, School of Theology at Claremont, January 22, 1970.

appropriateness/inappropriateness to the counseling process. The value of this study, then, is its attempt to provide the kind of integrative model described above.

Definitions

Pastoral Counseling. Pastoral counseling is seen here as a dimension of the church's ministry. It is more than Christian psychotherapy, that is, psychotherapy as defined by secular counseling theorists, and practiced by a confessed Christian.

The now classic statement of Niebuhr defines the purpose of the church as "the increase among men of the love of God and neighbor."¹¹ Pastoral counseling, as a dimension of that church and its ministry, shares this purpose. Hendrix¹² has argued that pastoral counseling has inadequately addressed the purpose of love of God by focusing on the resolution of intrapsychic and interpersonal dimensions of alienation, when "In fact, intrapsychic and interpersonal alienation may be merely symptomatic of a more fundamental alienation: namely alienation from the transcendent dimension of consciousness..."

11

H. Richard Niebuhr, The Purpose of the Church and Its Ministry (New York: Harper & Row, 1956), p. 31.

12

Harville Hendrix, "Pastoral Counseling: In Search of a New Paradigm," Pastoral Psychology, XXV, 3 (Spring 1977), 157-172.

Basic to this study is the broader paradigm he suggests; ". . . the image of the counselor as prophet, by the location of the human problem also at the interface of the self and the ultimate, and by a diagnosis of the human problem as alienation from transcendence."¹³

Insight Counseling. London¹⁴ has made a useful distinction for the understanding of the nature of psychotherapy. He divides therapy into two groups, depending on the techniques employed to respond to what brings people to psychotherapy. That is symptoms, defined, with intentional vagueness, as "that something is bothering them."¹⁵

The two groups are insight and action modes of therapy. The latter takes as its task the removal of the symptomatic behavior, without regard to the person's understanding of the problem. In other terms, this is the behaviorist approach.

Insight therapies, in contrast, are explicitly concerned with understanding. The radical behaviorist view denies any significance to understanding, choice, sense of worth, and a host of other non-sensory elements of experience. One may make the case that regardless of their theory, change in action therapy entails an altered existential self-understanding.

¹³
Ibid., p. 159.

¹⁴
Perry London, Modes and Morals of Psychotherapy (New York: Holt, Rinehar & Winston, 1964), esp., pp. 28-40.

I have also included under the rubric of insight counseling, the encounter movement, even though that movement has tended to eschew terms like "therapy" and "counseling" as implying the notion that the person is "sick" or otherwise in trouble. They prefer a more positive, learning and growth model of their enterprise. They are included here because they tend to be interested in insight and questions of meaning.

Finally, throughout this study, I will use the words therapy and counseling interchangeably. I find warrants for this in Gurman and Kriskern:

We have made no distinction between "therapy" and "counseling," since we feel that the application of such labels reflects habits developed in training rather than real differences in orientation or technique.¹⁶

Religious Concerns. As developed in this study, religious concerns are concerns about life's fundamental worth and meaning and religious language is the attempt to represent the basis for that worth and meaning. It is clear from this definition that religious language is not exclusively the special symbol system of the historic religious traditions, including the Christian religion. While such special symbol systems

15

Ibid., p. 36.

16

Alan S. Gurman and David P. Kriskern, "Research on Marital and Family Therapy: Progress and Prospect," in Sol L. Garfield and Allen E. Bergin (eds.) Handbook of Psychotherapy and Behavior Change (New York: Wiley, 1978), p. 818.

are included, the field of religious language and concern is as broad as the field of persons concerned with the question of life's worth and meaning and an adequate understanding of the basis of that meaning.

Theistic Language. Theistic language, or God-talk, is a specific kind of religious language. Since religious language is any language which functions to represent the ground of confidence in life's worth and meaning, theistic language does not exhaust the category of religious language: persons might believe that the worth of their existence is grounded in something other than God, for instance, individual fiat, membership in the Aryan race, or naturally curly hair.

Theistic language is adequate to the extent that it describes the divine reality and, in the case of counseling, to the extent that it appropriately describes the objective ground of confidence as experienced by the counselee.

Authentic Faith. Authentic faith is the appropriate existential response to God's self-revelation. As existential response, it is only more or less self-conscious.

Reflective Clarity. As employed here, reflective clarity refers to clarity about the ground of confidence in life's worth and meaning.

Secular Thinking. Secular thinking is the contemporary view of human existence that honors human autonomy and

integrity and is unwilling to refer its significance to any supposed supernatural sphere. Ogden defines secularity (as distinguished from secularism) as "the emphatic affirmation that man and the world are of ultimate significance."¹⁷

Limitation of the Study

This study includes no attempt to measure empirically the presence of concerns with meaning in persons coming to counseling or the relative depth of those concerns we only purport to be present in counseling.

Second, this study does not attempt to distinguish between types of religious language, such as Ogden's distinction between witness and theology proper. Aside from arguing that it is the counselee's religious reflection that is important, the study does not delineate either the appropriate sub-categories of religious language or their respective values in counseling.

One might, for instance, argue that the language of narrative is most appropriate to the concreteness of counseling and that the language of systematic theology exceeds the functional boundaries of counseling, even pastoral counsel-

17

Schubert M. Ogden, The Reality of God and Other Essays (New York: Harper & Row, 1964), p. 44.

ing. However, I have chosen merely to recognize this question without attempting its full explication.

Chapter II

FAITH, SECULARITY, AND THE COUNSELING PROCESS

SECULAR FAITH AND THE TRANSCENDENCE OF GOD

The Contemporary Problem in Pastoral Counseling

The structure and argument of this chapter follows that of Ogden's essay, The Reality of God.¹ The intention is to demonstrate the way in which Ogden's argument about the problem of post-liberal theology is exemplified in contemporary pastoral counseling and that his solution to that problem is, in fact, also the answer to the problem of the revelation of God in pastoral counseling. It is the argument of Ogden's essay that suggests the premises I employ in this study and in my own work.

Those premises are that a person's relationship to God is an integral element in counseling, that alienation from God and the hope of its being overcome is what often brings people to counseling--whether pastoral counseling or any other--and that the term, God, has a referent beyond the intrapsychic or interpersonal dimension of reality.

¹ Schubert M. Ogden, Reality of God and Other Essays (New York: Harper & Row, 1964).

2

Hendrix² has argued that these apparently basic premises of pastoral counseling have not played so basic a role in pastoral counseling as one might imagine. Indeed, he suggests that such premises offer a new paradigm for pastoral counseling:

. . . what I am saying is that pastoral counseling, which arises out of and has its roots in the sacred religious tradition, has adopted a desacralized, non-religious view of man. . . . Man in pastoral counseling literature is psychological man, man of nature and culture. He has been deprived of spirit by being perceived as rooted in nature and culture.³

He sees pastoral counseling literature confusing psychological issues for spiritual ones, out of a failure to take into account transcendent dimensions of reality. Thus "religion and theology generally have been dealt with as resources for psychological enrichment rather than as expressive of a particular domain of the human self."⁴ It is as if pastoral counseling has seen love of God as an instrumental value, enhancing the primary goals of love of self and others.

While this study shall take issue with the notion that the love of God is a "particular domain of the human self," it affirms the concern with seeing religion and theology as

2

Harville Hendrix, "Pastoral Counseling: In Search of a New Paradigm," Pastoral Psychology, XXV, 3 (Spring 1977), 157-72.

3

Ibid., p. 162.

4

Ibid.

a resource for strictly intrapersonal or interpersonal concerns. For instance, one of the delegates to the 1979 annual meeting of the American Association of Pastoral Counselors stated in conversation that "pastors are doing supportive therapy." It is against such attempts to subsume the witness of the church under the rubric of therapy that the study is, in part, directed.

If Hendrix is correct in his assessment of the current state of pastoral counseling, we have sold our birthright. This study assumes the substantial accuracy of this judgment. The motives that have led to this situation are varied. These motives include the nearly universal concern to defend and support the autonomy of the individual.⁵ It has generally been argued that reference to Godtalk intrudes on the individual's autonomous process.⁶ This process is the primary concern and, therefore, Godtalk is a pollution or perversion of that process.

5

Don S. Browning, The Moral Context of Pastoral Care (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1976), p. 23, in an otherwise valuable study, fails to address the legitimate concern over loss of autonomy involved in pastoral counseling's timidity over "incorporation of members and their discipline in the group goals and practices of the church."

6

A more detailed examination of this concern will follow in the examination of the case studies below.

Ogden has significantly clarified the legitimate dimensions of secular thinking vis-a-vis God claims. Secular thinking has been a rich resource for pastoral counseling. If pastoral counseling has failed to understand adequately a person's relationship to God as a vital element in counseling, it is likely the case that pastoral counseling has also borrowed the confusion of secular thought regarding the question of God. Through Ogden's clarification of the significance of secularity, we may come to understand more clearly the reticence of pastoral counseling to employ Godtalk, for good reasons and bad. It is my view that pastoral counseling has accepted, uncritically, the secular framework of those psychologists and practitioners from whom it has borrowed. With Ogden's help, we may be enabled to borrow more discriminatingly from these sources.

In Ogden's view, the problem of God has taken a new and central focus in our time. Briefly put, the problem is to find a way of speaking of God that both honors the Biblical witness to God's manifestation in Jesus Christ, while also honoring the legitimate claims of modern people. It is important to note that this agenda is not solely determined by the contemporary situation. That is, Ogden is not willing to sacrifice the integrity of the Biblical witness and the Christian's final allegiance to it in the name of modernity. For instance, the program of demythologizing⁷

⁷
See below, p. 77-88.

is not warranted simply by the requirements of the self-understanding of modern people. He quotes with approval the following statement of Bultmann:

If the task of demythologization was originally demanded by the conflict between the world-picture formed by scientific thinking, it soon became evident that demythologization is a demand of faith itself. For the latter requires to be freed from every world-picture sketched by objectifying thinking, whether it be that of myth or that of science.⁸

Most theological discussion has, Ogden believes, seen the issue as being caught on the horns of a dilemma, demanding an either-or decision. Ogden refuses to interpret the options as mutually exclusive. That is, he chooses to argue that the claims of modernity and the Biblical witness can both be honored without sacrificing essential elements of either. Indeed, they must be honored if Christian faith is to remain a vital option.

Central to the claims of modernity is the proposition that the scientific method is a legitimate method of ascertaining truth, not to be interfered with in the name of any transcendent justification. "So far as his knowledge of the world is concerned, modern man long ago opted for the method of science and therewith decided irrevocably for secularity."⁹

8

Schubert M. Ogden, Christ Without Myth (New York: Harper and Row, 1969), p. 43, from Rudolf Bultmann, Kerygma und Mythos (Hamburg: Reich, 1952), II, 207, Kerygma and Myth (New York: Harper & Row, 1961), p. 210.

9

Ogden, Reality of God, p. 8.

Therefore, all truth claims subject to empirical investigation must be verified without appeal to a special revelation. This claim, along with the internal demand of the Scriptural witness itself, provides the basis for the progress of demythologization. All religious claims that appear to make judgments about factual matters, such as historical claims, must be subject to the principles of scientific verification. In fact, the program of demythologization is designed to show that the claims of Scripture are not about matters of fact, (e.g., historical judgments) but about a different order of reality, which claims it intends to clarify.

However, a more problematic feature of the modern scene is the further claim that scientific knowledge is the only legitimate form of knowledge and that an adequate analysis of action in the world disallows reference to a transcendent guarantor of meaning. In brief, all talk of God seems meaningless: without reference to anything in experience. This view denies any denotative significance to statements that cannot meet the test of empirical verification. Thus, Ayer¹⁰ can dismiss with a few strokes of his pen whole fields of human enterprise, including religion and art, from the arena of significant denotative discourse. This latter claim as distinguished from the former, more modest claim, is referred to by Ogden as "secularism."

10

A. J. Ayer, Language, Truth and Logic (London: Gollancz, 1936).

To the former, he applies the term "secularity."¹¹ Secularism goes beyond the defense of the claims of science to a given field of study to the claim that the field of science, the field of empirical investigation, is the only significant field of human knowledge, aside from the "purely¹² analytic truths of logic and mathematics."

Ogden finds little difficulty in dismissing positivism on the grounds of its own internal inconsistencies: its judgment that only scientifically verifiable statements are meaningful is itself incapable of scientific verification. However, the secularism of modern morality he finds more telling, leading as it usually does to the conclusion that moral action is significant only if the reality of God is denied. Human freedom is the necessary condition of genuine morality and God is traditionally understood so that God's reality would limit human freedom.

In response, Ogden argues that such claims have weight against the particular tradition of Godtalk which he describes as the "classical" theological tradition, and not necessarily against other ways of speaking of God, particularly the understanding employed by process philosophy. The liabilities of the classical view, he believes, derive from the unfortunate grafting of Biblical insights

¹¹
Ogden, Reality of God, p. 6.

¹²
Ibid., p. 15.

onto the roots of classical Greek metaphysics, yielding hopeless contradictions, piously and hopelessly disguised in the theological tradition as "mysteries."

For example, God as viewed in Greek thought as actus purus is understood as radically non-contingent on human behavior, and as totally unaffected by it. Nonetheless, the traditional moral view of the end of human action is the service of this same God for whom such services is irrelevant. It is this concept which is found morally repugnant to secular moralists, such as Sartre and Feuerbach. Like them, Ogden affirms that:

If what we do and suffer as men in the world is from God's perspective wholly indifferent, that perspective is at most irrelevant to our actual existence. It can provide no motive for action, no cause to serve, and no comforts already supplied by our various secular undertakings. But, more than that, to involve ourselves in these undertakings and to affirm their ultimate significance is implicitly to deny the god who is himself finally conceived as the denial of our life in the world. Small wonder that countless men have concluded with Ludwig Feuerbach that "the question of the existence or non-existence of god is the question of the non-existence or existence of man."¹³

Ogden, then, chooses to fight on two fronts: opposing the secularistic claim that all talk of God is meaningless, while joining in the fight with, and sharing the distaste for, the logical inconsistencies of "classical metaphysics." It will be shown further, how Ogden defends the claims of

13

Ibid., p. 18.

theological discourse precisely through the affirmation of human confidence, carefully examined. Belief in God, rather than undercutting human confidence, is present in such confidence as its ground. As the defenders of the legitimate claims of human confidence, the avowed atheists of modern time actually serve, in a complex way, to defend the claims of God.¹⁴

This affirmation of human experience is elsewhere described as having two foci:

(1) the picture of the world formed by modern science and,

(2) man's understanding of himself as a closed inner unity.¹⁵

Both foci contain a notion of a seamlessness of truth and explanatory power. Although pictures of the world change, an unchanging constant is the idea of "lawfulness" of things, whether understood and properly conceived or not. From this viewpoint, one "looks upon the world as a lawfully ordered unity 'closed' to the interference of nonnatural agents."¹⁶ The second part of the scientific viewpoint is

¹⁴
cf. Schubert M. Ogden, "The Strange Witness of Unbelief," in *ibid.*, pp. 120-43.

¹⁵
Ogden, Christ Without Myth, p. 32, following Bultmann.

¹⁶
Ibid.

that to be human is to be an undivided unity, not open to some second order of causality, such as spirits. Although this thinking has come to clarity in "modern science," it is only the fruition of a kind of thought that "is as primitive as existence itself."¹⁷ It is, I believe, convictions of this sort that have been mustered to keep Godtalk out of pastoral counseling practice and theory, and are the bases of the concern for individual autonomy. The necessity of these viewpoints resides precisely in their being fundamental to thinking itself, in any cogent fashion, and only incidentally related to modern science, the occasion of these principles being brought to clarity. In other words, these principles are not merely concepts that have come into fashion, and may subsequently be superseded by later scientific constructs. They are central to the way modern people view the world. To sacrifice this viewpoint is to deny a fundamental element in our experience, to attempt to believe what flies in the face of our deepest convictions about the way things are. Ogden thinks that these principles have ontological status, determinative for any lucid account of human experience.

It is clearly Ogden's intention to accept the requirement that talk of God must be faithful to human experience:

17
Ibid.

The only way any conception of God can be made more than a mere idea having nothing to do with reality is to exhibit it as the most adequate reflective account we can give of certain experiences in which we all inescapably share.¹⁸

It is also precisely at this point that Ogden's thinking is most helpful to pastoral counseling: at the point of accepting the challenge of secular thought to make sense of "our affirmation of life here and now in the world in all its aspects and its proper autonomy and significance."¹⁹ Pastoral counseling has drawn extensively upon many schools of psychological thought that, according to the definition above, are appropriately described as "secular," and have provided more or less adequate accounts of human experience.

Pastoral counseling, too, has wished to share in these principles of science and their concomitant "affirmation of life here and now in the world." Thornton has defined pastoral counseling as:

[a] form of religious ministry which integrate(s) the findings of behavioral science and theology in the effort to prepare the way for divine-human encounter in the midst of human crises.²⁰

¹⁸
Ibid.

¹⁹
Ibid.

²⁰
Edward C. Thornton, Theology and Pastoral Care (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1964), p. 27.

This statement, while drawn from a different theo-
logical perspective than Ogden, expresses the kind of basic
 commitment pastoral counseling has had to the scientific
 enterprise and its secular faith. Indeed, Oden's recent
 work, Agenda for Theology,²¹ has catalogued the almost exclu-
 sive use contemporary pastoral counseling literature has made
 of secular psychotherapy, comparing the bibliography of ten
 current writers with ten other examples of pre-Freudian pas-
 toral care.

Ogden's opening statement in The Reality of God is
 that "the reality of God has now become the central theolog-
 ical problem,"²² a statement qualified, but not repudiated in
 his later writing. This study contends that the same state-
 ment holds true for pastoral care and counseling as it ad-
 dresses the secular world of psychotherapy. Ogden's account
 of secular thought illuminates the quandary of pastoral
 counseling as described by Hendrix.²³ That is, pastoral coun-
 seling, too, has failed to distinguish between secular and
 secularistic thinking and has shared in the paralysis of
 theology stemming from secularistic attack.

²¹ Thomas C. Oden, Agenda for Theology (San Francisco:
 Harper & Row, 1979).

²² Ogden, Reality of God, p. 1.

If Ogden's doctrine of God can clarify the relationship of God to this secular world, affirmed alike by secular therapists and pastoral counselors, we will be on our way to an understanding of the role Godtalk may take in pastoral counseling. However, it is not Ogden's intention alone, but his project itself that finally determines the usefulness of his theology for pastoral counseling.

God and Secularity

It has been indicated above²⁴ that the secularistic tradition views the belief in God as antithetical to the affirmation of life in the world. Rather than a meek denial that such belief undercuts faith in the human project, Ogden argues that belief in God is necessary, indeed, and a "unavoidable"²⁵ postulate if the assumed worth of our existence is to be given an adequate accounting.

Taking another look at Anselm's ontological argument, he affirms that central to the idea of God is the notion that God is, in some sense, real for everyone, that "no one can in every sense deny him."²⁶ Therefore, an adequate analysis of human experience must point to, rather than exclude, God. At

²⁴ Ogden, Reality of God, p. 5-6.

²⁵ Ibid., p. 21.

²⁶ Ibid.

27

one point, at least, Ogden and Tillich²⁷ share common ground: both affirm that Anselm's "argument" is not an argument at all, but an inventory of what it means to come to terms with our experience, such that to conceive the issue clearly is to show the self-evident nature of the "argument."

The secularistic attack on the argument to which Ogden addresses himself is the notion that, in fact, the idea cannot be conceived clearly, and is not simply untrue, but meaningless; meaningless because it has no reference to our experience.

The adequate defense against this attack would demonstrate that faith in God plays a constitutive role in human life. Atheism, as the "godlessness of the mind in which the reality of God is denied at the level of full self-consciousness"²⁸ will be "finally bound to fail."

Even idolatry, itself, is not a total lack of trust in God, a "division of faith wholly away from God himself" but is the regard of a non-divine thing as "having a unique significance as a symbol or sacrament of God's presence: such that one's loyalty is "divided between God himself and the idol," so that the objective ground of confidence (God) is seen to be related to a limited sphere of human experience.

²⁷
Paul Tillich, "Two Types of Philosophy of Religion," in his Theology of Culture (New York: Oxford University Press, 1959), pp. 10-20.

²⁸
Ibid., p. 24.

Ogden's discussion proceeds from the analysis of religious language by Toulmin²⁹ who argues that human experience includes a desire for re-assurance about life's meaning and that religion is employed to provide that re-assurance. The criterion for evaluating such language is its ability, or lack thereof, to provide such reassurance. For instance, the field of moral inquiry may reach the point of certain "limiting questions" such as ". . . why ought I to keep my promise anyway?" While such a question is not strictly answerable on moral grounds, it does arise in moral inquiry. Such questions can arise in "some actual situation in human life" which gives voice to the "desire for reassurance, for a general confidence about the future." If scientific logic enables one to "understand our experience and predict particular future events,"³⁰ a limiting question which may arise in such discourse is "Why care about predicting the future?" That such questions do arise in human experience, and that answers to such questions provide a significant function in human experience, both Toulmin and Ogden agree.

It is to the implications of this argument that Ogden addresses himself. He notes, first, that the stated function of such language is to re-assure, which implies a more basic confidence that somehow had been eroded:

29

Stephen Toulmin, An Examination of the Place of Reason in Ethics (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1950).

30

Ogden, Reality of God, p. 28.

In this sense, the answers to the religious question, in the form of particular religious assertions, have a strictly representative character. They are not so much the cause of our general confidence that existence is meaningful as its effect. By this I mean that the various "religions" or "faiths" of mankind, including what may be called the "Christian religion," are one and all expressions or re-presentations of a yet deeper faith that precedes them. Logically, prior to every particular religious assertion is an original confidence in the meaning and worth of life. . . .³¹

Secondly, the relevance of such assertions to human endeavor is clear. Morality and science alike rest on the basic confidence that religious language functions to re-establish. That such confidence is evident in people for whom religious assertions are not meaningful is agreed. Nevertheless, the importance of that underlying confidence remains at the heart of any human activity, the confidence that affirms that our action is "worth it."

Confidence is a relational term; it is confidence in something. It is Ogden's contention that the object of this phrase, this "something," is what is meant by the term "God."

The primary use or function of "god" is to refer to the objective ground in reality itself of our ineradicable confidence in the final worth of our existence.³²

He argues further that "It lies in the nature of this basic confidence to affirm that the real whole of which we experience ourselves to be parts is such as to be worthy of, and thus to

³¹
Ibid., p. 33-34

³²
Ibid., p. 37

evoke, that very confidence."³³ It is this notion of the
 "real whole" to which we and our significance adhere that is
 at once the central and most problematic issue in Ogden's con-
 frontation of secular faith. It is Ogden's view that this
 "real whole" is, indeed, the proper referent for the term
 "God." It should be noted that, by this analysis, God is a
 fundamental element in the experience of every person, such
 that any account of human experience that fails to take ac-
 count of this reality is inadequate. Ogden sees arrayed
 against his notion two alternative understandings of exper-
³⁴
 ience.

The defining characteristic of the first type in that
 experience is understood to be primarily, if not exclusive-
 ly, the perception of ourselves and our world which takes
 place by means of our sense experience. . . . Consistent
 with its understanding of experience as primarily sense
 perception, this view holds that the only solid core of
 our knowledge is comprised of assertions that may be di-
 rectly or indirectly verified by appeal to such percep-
 tion.³⁵

We recognize here the viewpoint referred to earlier as "sec-
 ularism." Since we noted earlier Ogden's critique of this
 viewpoint, we shall turn to the second:

³³
 Ibid., p. 37.

³⁴
 Schubert M. Ogden, "Present Prospects for Empirical
 Theology" in Bernard E. Meland (ed.) The Future of Empirical
 Theology (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969), pp. 65-
 88, esp. 76-88.

³⁵
 Ibid., p. 77f.

It is defined by the understanding that sense perception is neither the only nor even the primary mode of experience, but is rather derived from a still more elemental awareness both of ourselves and of the world around us.³⁶

The foremost expression of this viewpoint, so far as Protestant theology is concerned, is existentialism. Central to the existential understanding of experience is the fundamental non-sensuous awareness of ourselves in relationship to others, mutually affecting one another, while at the same time experiencing ourselves as "radically free and responsible."³⁷ This viewpoint significantly broadens the arena of human knowledge, in comparison to the stricter empiricism of secularism. Indeed, this "more radical type of empiricism" insists on the relatively greater importance of our non-sensuous experience.

Still and all, neither viewpoint gives aid or comfort to the conviction that our experience is grounded in the "real whole" which Ogden asserts to be the basis of our confidence in our life's worth and meaning.

Despite their significant difference, the two types of empiricism are in complete agreement at one crucial point. They both assume that the sole realities present in our

36

Ibid., p. 78.

37

It is interesting to note that Rogers, Oden's primary mentor in the field of psychotherapy, in his phenomenological approach to personhood, struggles with the issue of freedom and determinism from a perspective that lacks the resource of existential analysis. He nonetheless recognizes the fundamental experience of ourselves as free, choosing persons. Carl Rogers, On Becoming a Person (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1961), pp. 192 f.

experience, and therefore the only objects of our certain knowledge, are ourselves and the other creatures that constitute the world.³⁸

The only recourse to any who would refer our confidence in life's meaning to a transcendent ground is an alternative account of our experience. This account Ogden finds in selected portions of Whitehead's writing, especially Modes of Thought parts I and II. The specific lecture to which Ogden refers is one in which Whitehead examines "those general characterizations of our experience which are presupposed in the directed activities of mankind."³⁹ Ogden summarizes Whitehead's argument as follows:

First, it makes the point that the most primitive mode of our experience is an awareness at once of being and of value; it is our dim sense of reality, as such, as something that matters, or has worth or is of intrinsic importance.⁴⁰

Whitehead's own felicitous phrase is this:

Its [our enjoyment of actuality] basic expression-- Have a care, here is something that matters! Yes--that is the best phrase--the primary glimmering of consciousness reveals, Something that matters.⁴¹

The experience of worth and meaning, rather than being derived from sensory data or established by fiat, is given in and with our most immediate experience.

³⁸

Ogden, "Present Prospects. . .," p. 79.

³⁹

Alfred North Whitehead, Modes of Thought (New York; Macmillan, 1938), pp. 1-2, quoted in *ibid.*, p. 83.

⁴⁰

Ogden, in *ibid.*, p. 85.

⁴¹Whitehead, p. 159.

The second point in Ogden's summary is that there is a third and essential factor to our experience alongside the awareness of ourselves and the other: the experience of the Whole, which includes both self and other, and from which importance flows; from this One to the many--ourselves and the others we encounter. Worth is a given of our experience which, as we experience it, does not adhere to any "finite occasion."

Whitehead states that: "There must be value beyond ourselves. Otherwise everything experienced would be merely a barren detail in our solipsist mode of existence."⁴² To have confidence in life's worth and meaning then means that one has confidence precisely in this "real whole."

Granting the accuracy of this analysis of human confidence, questioning the reality of God is meaningless. If religious reasoning functions to answer the kind of question, "What makes sense of this confidence I have about life," the belief in God, so defined is inescapable. Ogden argues that to pose the question above is to render the question of God's reality meaningless, and not to pose the question is to "leave religious issues in principle undecided."

Ogden's argument establishes that, indeed, secular valuation of the human enterprise does, of necessity, entail

⁴²

Ibid., p. 142.

confidence in a transcendent referent. He thereby establishes that "secular faith" is self-contradictory, and consists of a cognitive misconception.

A further difficult question is posed by Harvey, when he says, "But what if Becker's notion of 'basic terror' rather than basic confidence lies at the heart of our experience?"⁴³ Langdon Gilkey, too, questions Ogden's claim that "faith in God in some mode is unavoidable."⁴⁴ Becker's vision of the unspeakable terror of death certainly appears to fly in the face of Ogden's claim to a basic and universal confidence in life, and also finds echoes in the writings of such authors as Sartre, whose thinking Ogden finds interesting and instructive. Becker's argument is that the engine of repression is the terror before life and death, rather than the Freudian notion of sexuality. However, his formulation of the basic terms of our existence raise themes similar to Ogden's:

Here I want to accent how global or total this fear [of life and death] is. . . . If the universe is fundamentally and globally terrifying to the natural perceptions of the young animal, how can he dare to emerge into it with confidence. . . .

We now understand how a phenomenology of religious exper-

⁴³

Van A. Harvey, "The Pathos of Liberal Theology," Journal of Religion, LVI, 4(October 1976), 382-91, referring to Ernest Becker, The Denial of Death (New York: Free Press, 1973)

⁴⁴

Langdon Gilkey, "A Theology in Process," Interpretation, XXI (October 1967), 447-59.

ience ties into psychology: right at the point of the problem of courage.⁴⁵

I think I have delivered the science of man over to a merger with theology By showing that psychology destroys our illusions of autonomy and hence raises the question of the true power source for human life.⁴⁶

Note that for him, too, religion's task is to provide reassurance in the face of the lack of confidence, indeed, in the face of terror. He sees the relations of religion to psychology in the same way Ogden sees the relation of other arenas of human endeavor--to provide the reassurance they themselves cannot provide.

These interesting similarities cannot, however, obscure a radical difference. For Becker, the fundamental experience of life is terror, not confidence. For him, data which suggest that terror is a secondary, learned phenomenon, point, really, only to the effectiveness of repression.

Ogden however, is aware that human responses are not unequivocally confident. He argues only that even the most radical denial of life's meaning, such as suicide, can not be options for the nullity of that choice--one must at least take suicide seriously. Indeed, suicide is a quintessentially passionate experience. Passion is defined as "a strong

45

Ernest Becker, The Denial of Death, pp. 145, 50.

46

Becker, in an interview in Sam Keen, Voices and Visions (New York: Perennial Library, 1974), p. 180.

liking for or devotion to some activity, object, or concept."⁴⁷ Even the most nihilistic writer by the act of writing something, affirms the significance of his decision to write. Even the most withdrawn "schizophrenic," perhaps paralyzed for years in the back ward of some hospital, fearing to make any decision, has made a decision expressing the meaning of his/her option for safety. Decisions are unavoidable and imply the objectively grounded value of the option chosen.

In a larger sense, the question of the priority of terror or confidence need not be adjudicated. Otto has pointed to the dual aspect of the Holy as both "awefulness" and "fascination."⁴⁸ The Biblical witness to the profound ambiguity of Israel's relationship to God is poignantly illustrated in the question, "For who is there of all flesh, that has heard the voice of the living God speaking out of the midst of fire, as we have, and still lived."⁴⁹

Confidence and fear are throughout our experience intermingled. Indeed, it is in the face of those fears induced by life's boundary situations that the re-assurance that religion attempts to provide finds its function. Nonetheless,

⁴⁷ Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary (Springfield, MA: Merriam, 1976)

⁴⁸ Rudolf Otto, Idea of the Holy (London: Oxford University Press, 1950)

the reality of some form of confidence cannot be found totally lacking in our experience--and that is Ogden's point.

Nor is it telling to argue the obvious point that the term "confidence" here is understood as a very broad net, collecting very dissimilar kinds of fish. Ogden's point is that no matter the differences, casting this net across human experience always catches fish, whether carp or bass. The relative valuation of such different kinds of fish does nothing to the claim that they are, indeed fish. That is, they are representations of the basic confidence about life's worth and meaning. We may represent the ground of their confidence in the most idolatrous fashion; or we may represent this ground of confidence as the one true God, beyond objectification and manipulation. In either case, the representations are attempts to make sense of that original confidence. Further, confidence in the meaning of our choices is not to be happy with such choices. Or better, to see that we unavoidably regard our choices as meaningful does not indicate that we are required to see them as good. The choice between hanging and starvation may be a meaningful choice. We aren't required to believe, further, that these alternatives are good.

In sum, secular affirmation of humanity and the world, rather than a denial of God, is an affirmation of faith in God. This affirmation is undercut, curiously by secularism and classical theism.

The conceptuality which must be employed to explicate this experience of God must be strictly drawn from this experience. The failure of classical theism, in Ogden's view, is its inclusion of categories not derived from this universal experience of basic confidence.

The first logical consequence drawn from this analysis is that God is genuinely related to and thereby affected by everyone and everything that is:

The very idea that something is meaningful or worthwhile assumes that the ground of its worth is bound to it by genuine ties of real internal relationship.⁵⁰

To hold that God both grounds our life's meaning and also that God is totally unaffected by our actions is, Ogden holds, "logically impossible."⁵¹ Ultimately, our lives matter because they matter to God. God is, indeed, that One most affected by our actions, as one who is literally as near as hands and feet and breathing. Rather than an imperfection, Ogden interprets God's status as the "eminent effect of all things."⁵² As the basis of our life's worth and meaning.

50

Ogden, Reality of God, p. 141.

51

Ibid., p. 47.

52

Ibid., p. 223.

Indeed, the final hope for our life's meaning, as interpreted in the Christian doctrines of resurrection and eternal life resides in the life of God. The eternal significance of our life is that God remembers and cherishes fully all that our lives entail.⁵³ The reluctance of classical theism to accept this point is the focus of Ogden's attack. He finds warrant for this view not only in his analysis of experience, but also in Scriptural witness to God's care for the world. He believes that classical theism essentially eliminates or discounts as anthropomorphisms the scriptural account of God's relationship to the world.

The second consequence is that God, as the ground of basic confidence, must be radically non-contingent, with regard to his existence.

Unless the ground of our life's significance exists absolutely, relative to no cause or condition whatever, that significance could not be truly ultimate or permanent, and so could not be the object of an unshakable confidence.⁵⁴

This bi-polar view differs markedly from "classical theism."

Gilkey has argued that Ogden's argument really only addresses itself to a limited section of theological history; that the diversity of theology disallows the use of a blanket

⁵³
Ibid., pp. 206-30.

⁵⁴
Ibid., p. 48.

phrase like "classical theism."⁵⁵ However, Ogden's argument recognizes a multitude of attempts to go beyond the limitations of the view described. His criticism is not of the intentions but of the product of these attempts.

The presentation, despite its exclusion of many issues central to Ogden's writing will have succeeded if it has demonstrated how faith in God is unavoidably expressed in the affirmation of the value of human life--since it is this same affirmation which we confront in both pastoral counseling and the varied secular therapies from which it has borrowed so extensively, and is the core of the valuation of human autonomy.

As was noted above,⁵⁶ one aspect of the reluctance of secular and pastoral counseling that leads to a suspicion of Godtalk was the concern for the defense of the autonomy of the individual. This section has sought to demonstrate that belief in God, far from threatening the valuation of the autonomy of the individual, is implicit in that valuation as its ground.

HUMAN EXISTENCE AND THE TRANSCENDENCE OF GOD

The chapter began with the acceptance of Hendrix' challenge to see alienation from transcendence as a central issue in counseling. This section will attempt to describe the

⁵⁵
Gilkey.

⁵⁶
Ogden, Reality of God, p. 2.

human situation in a way that makes sense of that affirmation along with the further claim that counseling holds the possibility of addressing such alienation and being the occasion whereby alienation from transcendence is overcome.

As indicated in the previous section, it is impossible to speak appropriately of God without at the same time speaking of humanity. To clarify the meaning of God's transcendence is, at the same time, to clarify what (or who) is transcended. To speak of revelation is necessarily to speak of the recipient of revelation.

The demon of subjectivism cannot be exorcised by a tacked-on mythology or ontology, which has no ground in human experience. The transcendence of God must be experienced in order to be talked of at all. Ogden affirms that:

Christian faith is to be interpreted exhaustively and without remainder as man's original possibility of authentic existence as this is clarified and conceptualized by an appropriate philosophical analysis.⁵⁷

Further:

. . . we must persist in the affirmation that "statements about God and his activity" may be interpreted without remainder as "statements about human existence."⁵⁸

57

Ogden, Christ Without Myth, p. 146.

58

Ibid., p. 153. The reverse of this proposition is also significant for pastoral counseling: "Statements about human existence may be interpreted as statements about God and His activity."

While our individual encounters with God are of a distinctively personal, that is, subject-to-subject, nature, the structure of this encounter can be analyzed without resort to "objectification," in the sense of dealing with God as if an object of sense experience. Nor, does such analysis lead to "a dissolution of theology into anthropology and to the sacrifice of faith's 'objective' reference to an exclusively 'subjective' interpretation."⁵⁹ Confidence is a relational term, requiring an object or ground of confidence. For instance, in discussing the meaning of the resurrection, Ogden affirms that while referring to "a possibility of self-understanding," resurrection also refers to a "divine actuality,"⁶⁰ in which the resurrection faith, or authentic existence, is grounded.

We have noted Ogden's view that we have an immediate, intuitive experience that is quite distinct from sensory experience. This field of experience is "our original internal awareness of ourselves and the world as included in the circumambient reality within which all things come to be, are⁶¹ what they are, and pass away. It is to this field of experience that talk of God properly applies:

⁵⁹
Ibid., p. 149.

⁶⁰
Ogden, Reality of God, p. 215f.

⁶¹
Ibid., p. 104.

All religious language, including the word "God" is existential language, the language in which we express and refer to our own existence as selves related to others and to the whole.⁶²

Here, the transcendence of God refers to the surpassing inclusion of the "circumambient reality" that includes everything and excludes nothing. He argues further⁶³ that this experience, following Whitehead, is not simply an experience of our own subjectivity, but is a "mode of experiencing what is other than ourselves." This mode of experiencing, distinct from sensory awareness, puts us in touch with a dimension of reality beyond ourselves.

The task of demythologizing is necessary not simply because of the critiques of mythology on the part of the scientific viewpoint, but to clarify the nature of God's transcendence, as apprehended by faith. God is not subject to the conditions that apply to objects of our sensory experience. Central to those conditions is the reality that objects of sense experience are available as tools for our life projects. Myth, in characterizing God as an object of sensory experience, suggests that God is, thus, available, "at hand,"⁶⁴ as a tool for the various projects of humanity.

62

Schubert M. Ogden, "Who Represents Christ?" Christianity and Crisis, XXIII (June 24, 1963), 106.

63

See, Ogden, "Lonergan and the Subjectivist Principle," Journal of Religion LI (July 1971), 155-72, esp. 163.

64

Ogden, Christ Without Myth, p. 49.

In so doing, it distorts the fundamental understanding of God's transcendence: precisely that God is not a manageable reality. The use of myth entails a "category mistake" that obscures the meaning of Scripture.

The distinction between the field of sensory experience and the field of immediate awareness is to be sharply drawn. This philosophic reflection on the valuation of the self as actor, set in the midst of a world, qualifies this perspective, in Frederick Coplestons' terms as existentialist:

First of all it [existentialism] means that the problem considered by the philosopher presents itself to him as one which arises out of his own personal existence as an individual human being who freely shapes his destiny but who seeks clarification in order to do so. Secondly, it means, I think, that the problem is of vital concern to him because he is a human being, and not simply as a result of accidental circumstances.⁶⁵

Ogden, nevertheless, insists that the distinction between these two fields characterizes other philosophic approaches as well.⁶⁶ At the same time, he also argues that the "classical" theistic view has failed to take with adequate seriousness the implications of that distinction.

Two constitutive elements of this field of experience are freedom and worth. Human freedom is a reality revealed in immediate intuition, a fundamental given of our experience,

⁶⁵

Frederick Copleston, Contemporary Philosophy (Westminster, MD: Newman Press, 1965), pp. 125, 31.

⁶⁶

Ogden, Reality of God, p. 105.

constitutive of that experience. Rather than arguing to the reality of freedom, Ogden simply points to freedom as an intuited given. That is, as experiencing subjects, we experience ourselves to be free, called to make decisions about our lives in the world and their meaning.

What he [a person] is, is never simply given, as in the case of inanimate objects or other subhuman creatures but, rather, is always in question and must be responsibly laid hold of by free decision.⁶⁷

Freedom is unavoidable; for human beings, our reality is never assigned to us, as the reality of a stone that simply is what it is. Rather, our life unavoidably requires decision-making. Moreover, it requires not simply decision-making about what is--judgments about the shape of reality, our own, and the world's--but about decisions about what ought to be. That is, the fruit of our decisions is disclosed to us to be of differential significance. Some decisions realize less value or worth than others, and, of necessity we make judgments, through our decisions about such worth.

This brings us to the second related constituent reality of ourselves as experiencing subjects: the sense of worth. "The essence of my experience is the sense of worth."⁶⁸

⁶⁷

Ogden, Christ Without Myth, p. 46.

⁶⁸

Ogden, "Who Represents Christ," p. 106.

This central issue that must again and again be freely decided is how to understand the ground of our sense of worth. No one can simply decide the issue for another; our lives themselves, in an unavoidably individual manner, express for each of us, those decisions. Therefore, the nature of that decision is never simply an intellectual matter. The decision is an eminently practical one, in which our actions realize a decision about the ground of our worth as persons. However, this sense of worth is commonly threatened in the face of the limiting questions discussed above.⁶⁹

Ogden agrees with Becker that death is a central element in the "boundary situations" which raise the question of worth and meaning. The boundary situations include finitude, as well as death. In the essay, "The Promise of Faith,"⁷⁰ Ogden poignantly describes the threat to our sense of worth in the face of the perpetual passing away of our memories, such that values realized inevitably recede from our memories.

Characteristic of these boundary situations is that the questions raised therein are not answerable by increased knowledge of the world of sensory experience or solvable by increased mastery of the objects of such experience:

⁶⁹
Supra, 30f.

⁷⁰
Ogden, Reality of God, pp. 206-30, esp., pp. 224ff.

Our most serious problem is that of accepting ourselves and the world, of pursuing scientific knowledge and embracing moral duty, in spite of conditions that make for the profoundest uncertainty about what the future holds.⁷¹

In contrast to the "god of the gaps," this dimension of experience is beyond human determination, not simply in fact, but in principle. Such questions are nonverifiable by scientific investigation.

Alienation

It is precisely the attempt to secure one's worth within the sphere of what is objectively visible and manageable that characterizes lack of faith, that constitutes alienation from transcendence. It is not the objects of sense experience that establish alienation; it is the decision to invest such objects or other persons with worth-assuring power that expresses alienation and constitutes idolatry.

The transitory nature of the objects of sense experience disqualifies them as the appropriate ground of the inherent confidence that our lives express.

Alienation from transcendence is the distrust of the circumambient reality that is both mysterious and unmanageable, a distrust occasioned by the boundary situations of life.

However, since the basic confidence in life's meaning is the unshakable necessity described above, people do not live

71

Ibid., p. 31

without such confidence, but rather invest it away from its appropriate ground (the encompassing and mysterious reality) onto the manageable world. In this way, not atheism, but idolatry is the actual alternative to trusting God:

. . . it is less that the idolator simply identifies the non-divine thing as God than that he regards it as having a unique significance as a symbol or sacrament of God's presence.⁷²

Since the formal definition of God is that which grounds our confidence in the worthwhileness of life, we see how God is not totally excludable from experience as the term atheism suggests.

Under the conditions of alienation, confidence in life's worth and meaning is understood as a task to be accomplished rather than a gift received, a project, rather than an acceptance of what is given. Our life's projects become the attempt to secure our worth and meaning, in Becker's terms, our individual striving for heroism.

Ogden recognizes the amalgam of conscious and unconscious factors that constitute our awareness and are, thus, also, descriptive of alienation. He distinguishes between "bottom of the heart" atheism, an existential and only "more⁷³ or less" conscious process and self-conscious disbelief. The former is determinative for our life and action, the latter not necessarily so related to our existence as a person. The term, "self-understanding" refers consistently to the former.

⁷² Ogden, Reality of God, p. 24.

⁷³ Ibid., p. 23.

This only "more or less conscious" existential self-understanding does not abrogate human freedom and responsibility for one's choice in understanding one's existence. Following Bultmann's existential interpretation, he affirms that Scripture supports the view that the human situation is not bondage under cosmic powers, such as Gnosticism held. The human situation includes an ineradicable relationship to God. Only such a view can make sense of the Biblical notion of the universality of sin. Sin implies free and responsible decision to turn aside from trusting God. Such a decision requires an original relationship to God. Therefore, since sin is seen to be a universal, so also there must be an original and universal knowledge of God.

. . . so far from excluding a "natural" knowledge of God, the fact of mankind's universal sinfulness presupposes it.⁷⁴

Revelation

With this, we come to the doctrine of revelation. As stated above, the understanding of alienation is based upon the conviction that God is continuously related to humanity in a way continually and reflectively knowable by humanity. Indeed, Ogden affirms that for the Christian theologian today, the "controlling center"⁷⁵ of the doctrine of revelation

⁷⁴ Ogden, Christ Without Myth, p. 157.

⁷⁵ Ibid., p. 156.

must be that "the word addressed to men everywhere, in all events of their lives, is none other than the word spoken in Jesus and in the preaching and sacraments of the church." He argues that any doctrine of revelation that restricts revelation to a particular historic episode denies the freedom of God to be revealed and hence to save humanity. This is the significance of Ogden's argument that for Bultmann, the Christ event remains a mythological event. For Bultmann, only in and through the ministry of Jesus and the church does saving knowledge of God become a "possibility in fact."⁷⁶ Ogden holds that such a view restricts God to a particular historic circumstance, and stands in conflict with the Biblical witness itself.⁷⁷

To be sure the deepest conviction of Christian faith is that God's saving action has been decisively disclosed in the event of Jesus of Nazareth; and in this sense Jesus is indeed God's "work" of salvation. But when this conviction is so expressed that the event of Jesus becomes a condition apart from which God is not free to be a gracious God, the heretical doctrine of work-righteousness achieves its final and most dangerous triumph.⁷⁸

This conviction of the universal presence of God, combined with the absolute transcendence of God over the sphere of observable events provides the basis of Ogden's doctrine of revelation, as well as its central problem. That is, how to speak of God's "acting" in history.

⁷⁶
Ibid., p. 112.

⁷⁷
Ibid., p. 141 ff.

⁷⁸
Ibid., p. 145.

First of all, revelation is not the imparting of information about the nature of the observable world, but the offer of a possibility of existential self-understanding, that constitutes a challenge not simply to intellectual beliefs, but to our life in the world, particularly ourselves in relation to the encompassing mystery of our life. What is addressed is our lives as constituting a response to that mystery. Therefore, to receive a revelation is to receive a new existential understanding of the possibilities of our individual lives.

To state that all accounts of revelation are existential statements is not to say that revelation is only a disclosure of human possibilities that excludes any direct talk of God. It requires only that the account of God's activity or revelation be drawn from the appropriate field of experience, that field described above as the field of
 79
 immediate awareness.

Essentially, God is related to the world in a way analogous to the persons' relationship to his/her body. That is, the world is God's body.

The explication of that relationship requires an account of how we are related to our bodies. The "self" consti-

tutes itself through decisions which express openness to all impinging influences or decisions on the basis of a much more restricted sensitivity than is actually possible."⁸⁰ In this description of basic options, Ogden repeats or underscores his original premise that the options available to humanity are trust in God and radical openness or idolatry (a restricted love of God).

God's relationship to the world is the eminent case of love, differing from human love in its being unqualified. "The whole world is, as it were, his [God's] sense organ, and his interaction with every creature is unimaginable, immediate and direct."⁸¹

What is outlined here is both a theology of transcendence and a psychology of transcendence. God's free decision to love the world transcends the world as its ground; the individual's self-constituting decisions transcend one's actions as their ground. Who a person is is never exhausted by his/her actions; who God is is never exhausted in God's creatures. The psychology is a non-behavioristic model; the self is not exhausted by reference to one's actions.

⁸⁰

Ogden, Reality of God, p. 177.

⁸¹

Ibid., p. 178.

82 Thus, the world of sensory experience is grounded in God. Every creature, to a certain extent, is an expression of God's activity.

However, there is also a second sense in which God may be said to be revealed in history, that also corresponds to human being and action. Just as certain human actions are said to be "characteristic" or expressive and illuminative of the free decisions of persons, so also certain events within history may be said to be characteristic or illuminative of the free decision, the intention of God. In this sense, though all a person's acts or God's acts are their own, still certain acts can be said to be of a particularly revelatory nature. Just as one might say that a particular act genuinely discloses clearly someone's intentions, so also, certain actions can be taken to be revelatory of God's intention.

82

Tyron Inbody, "Myth in Contemporary Theology: The Irreconcilable Issue," Anglican Theological Review, LVIII (April 1976), 39-57, misrepresents Ogden's view by denying that Ogden's doctrine of transcendence includes "his ultimacy as ground and source of the world." Such a concept of transcendence "is absent from, unreal for, and denied by Cobb and Ogden." (p. 55) It is Ogden's view that God is transcendent in both the senses described by Inbody:

1. ultimacy as ground and source of the structures of the world, and
2. "transcendent, in the sense of being an eminent exemplification of the categories [of being and becoming]."

Since God is related to every event as its ground, then any event can become a revelatory event, if it is received as an expression of God's intention. Necessary to the notion of revelation is the subjective pole of reception and symbolization. A revelation becomes a revelation as it becomes determinative for one's self-understanding and is symbolized through the actions out of that self-understanding. In that sense, human actions, "carry within themselves, so to speak, the possibility of becoming an act of God."⁸³

Religion, then, is the "intentionally symbolic action" in which one attempts to represent the "ultimate meaning of his/her existence."⁸⁴

The varied understandings of existence to which religions give expression indicates, further, the possibility of misrepresenting the divine action. Which is to say, there is an objective component of revelation, which is the divine intention. Religion is true or false as judged by whether it adequately or inadequately represents the "objective ground of confidence" or God.

This possibility clarifies what is meant by the Christian affirmation that Jesus of Nazareth is the decisive act of God: "to say of any historical event that it is the

83

Ogden, Reality of God, p. 183.

84

Ibid., pp. 181-83.

'decisive' act of God can only mean that in it, in distinction from all other historical events, the ultimate truth about our existence before God is normatively re-presented or revealed."⁸⁵ That is to say, the confession that Jesus is Lord means that in Jesus is seen the radical confidence in the ground of our existence that expresses complete openness, one who "makes. . . decisions by sensitively responding to all the influences that bear upon [him],"⁸⁶ thereby expressing the trustworthiness of the ground of existence.

This discussion clarifies how the term "God" refers to a dimension of reality that is both related to and distinct from the intrapsychic and interpersonal dimensions of reality. God as transcendent is related to the self and the other as the self's and the other's non-manageable ground. For Ogden, then, if counseling were to take into account transcendent dimensions of reality, it would require a counseling that addressed issues of basic confidence in life's meaning; that respected the non-manageable character of that ground. Counseling that addresses the issues of basic confidence in such a way that ignores or obscures the non-manageability of that ground would be an expression of idolatry.

Intrapsychic and interpersonal conflict cannot be separated from the question of the person's existential understanding of the ground of this confidence in life's worth

⁸⁵
Ibid., p. 184.

⁸⁶
Ibid., p. 177.

and meaning. In this regard, intrapsychic and interpersonal conflict entail throughout a religious issue.

It is, thus, apparent that a persons' relationship to God is an integral element in counseling; that alienation from the ground of confidence is a central element in the personal distress that leads persons to counseling. Persons come to counseling in response to the loss of confidence in life's worth and meaning, expressed fundamentally and centrally in a decreased sense of self-worth, out of an experienced intrapsychic conflict or, just as readily, through interpersonal conflict which calls into question their self-understanding. From Ogden's argument, we are urged to see that a loss of self-worth is, at one and the same time, a loss of confidence in the ground of that worth.

87

Erik H. Erikson, Childhood and Society (New York: Norton, 1964). It is clear that this argument parallels Erikson's view that the basic issue of trust and mistrust lies at the heart of all human development. Moreover, it reiterates Erikson's understanding of the function of religion: the re-establishment of basic trust through clarification of appropriate objects of trust and mistrust.

Chapter III

THEOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF THE COUNSELING PROCESS

The function of this chapter is to critique Oden's understanding of theology and therapy from the perspective of Ogden's theology. The purpose is to develop a consistent position that honors the claims of theology and does justice to the nature of the counseling process.

ODEN ON COUNSELING

Oden has been continually curious about the implicit faith expressed in several dimensions of the helping professions. In Kerygma and Counseling,¹ he clarifies the implicit, existential commitments in Carl Roger's client-centered therapy. In Game Free,² he conducts the same inquiry into Transactional Analysis, finding "there is an implicit theology in Transactional Analysis that does have a certain kinship to historical Judaeo-Christian faith."³ Later, in Intensive Group Experience,⁴ which he subtitled "The New Pietism," he clarifies the "implicit ontological assumptions of group trust" at work in the encounter movement.

¹ Thomas C. Oden, Kerygma and Counseling (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1966).

² Thomas C. Oden, Game Free (New York: Harper & Row, 1974).

³ Ibid., p. 48.

Faith and the Counselor

In my judgment, Oden has, in each of these writings, skillfully illustrated Ogden's contention that

. . . the same faith that is explicitly expressed through the specific cultural forms of religion is and must be implicitly expressed through all the other cultural forms--morality and politics, technology and the arts.⁵

In each of these modern and secular enterprises, Oden has discovered an implicit faith with at least marked similarities to Judaeo-Christian faith. It is this secular faith which Oden regards as decisive in counseling.

For instance, Oden describes Rogers' thought as a "dekerygmaticized" theology, containing the somehow obligatory threefold structure of a., analysis of human predicament; b., discussion of the redemptive possibilities; and c., "a prospectus for the growth of the self. . . in response to the redemptive possibility."⁶ [in Oden's view, these are the constitutive elements of theology]. Oden insists that Rogers is a theologian, not merely a thinker to whom theological labels can be applied, since Rogers does develop his own answers to the fundamental questions. At the same time, Oden

4

Thomas C. Oden, The Intensive Group Experience (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1972).

5

Schubert M. Ogden, Faith and Freedom (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1979), p. 60.

6

Oden, Kerygma and Counseling, p. 84.

⁷
criticizes Rogers for failing to see the tacit ontological claims involved in Rogers' theoretical formulations. In the discussion of Rogers as theologian, Oden seems to be arguing that theology consists of answering certain existential questions, without reference to God or the nature of reality, a view which, we shall see, he later criticizes.

Nonetheless, Rogers is an example, indeed a preferred example, of a secular counselor whose existential answers point toward the nature of God;

There is an implicit ontological assumption of all effective therapy not that it is merely the counselor who accepts the client, but that the client is acceptable as a human being by the ground of being itself. . . .⁸

Further, he footnotes Rogers' concurrence that "it is written in the universe that the individual is acceptable."⁹

Oden is arguing that there is a disguised word of grace and healing that is the engine of effective therapy. In Oden's view, this implicit assumption is "made explicit by God's self-disclosure in Jesus Christ."¹⁰ Moreover, looking at the psychotherapeutic process through the eyes of faith enables us to see "the so-called secular counseling situation as the arena of God's self-disclosure."¹¹ Oden

⁷
Ibid., p. 109ff.

⁸
Ibid., p. 21.

⁹
Ibid., p. 172.

¹⁰
Ibid.

¹¹
Ibid., p. 82.

argues that the therapist's implicit assumption mediates or symbolizes the kind of cosmic acceptance that is the engine of effective therapy.

It is evident that the only understanding of existence that makes sense out of the activity of the psychotherapist is the assumption that man ought not to be neurotically guilty, anxious, hostile, and under the power of destructive compulsions. The therapist accepts the client in the midst of his guilt and compulsions not on the narrow assumption that he is just privately acceptable to the therapist as a human being but on the much more basic assumption that he is acceptable as a human being by the cosmos or the universe or by being itself and that he is intended for authentic life. The counselor is not the source of acceptance; he only points to an acceptance that has its source beyond himself.¹²

In book after book, Oden has hammered home a similar theme, arguing that what is implicit in therapy, encounter, etc., and what is made explicit in the Gospel is the effective agent in these secular enterprises: that acceptance which is ontologically rooted and is known in the church, through the witness to Jesus Christ, as the love of God.

He is arguing consistently that the healing experienced in these enterprises is more than an interpsychic or interpersonal process. Like Hendrix, he wishes to point to the transcendent dimension as determinative. Far from ignoring issues of transcendence, Oden has seen such issues as central to understanding the power of therapy, encounter, etc., to achieve the results he is willing to attribute to them.

12

Ibid., p. 22.

Moreover, looking at the psychotherapeutic process through the eyes of faith enables us to see "the so-called secular counseling situation as the arena of God's self-disclosure."¹³ In a later book, Oden states that "[the trusting environment of a group] operates at the much deeper level of understanding the cosmic environment as trustworthy."¹⁴

However, this reality, this ontological acceptance, is, according to Oden, made known through the eyes of faith, by the analogia fidei. He is greatly exercised to show that much that is wrong with current understandings of pastoral counseling stems from the failure to note the priority of God's revelation to human understanding. The analogia fidei is a doctrine of analogy that stresses the priority of God's revelation in Jesus Christ. That is, since we know God's love through Jesus Christ, we are enabled to see the God, the ground of acceptance at work in the counseling process. Counseling is defined as a derived form of acceptance, based on the prior acceptance of God.

There are two elements in Oden's doctrine: (1) the direction of knowledge; and (2), the range of knowledge.

¹³
Ibid., p. 82

¹⁴
Oden, Intensive Group Experience, p. 93.

By the direction of knowledge, we mean that Oden insists on the priority of God's action to human understanding. He is opposed to any "natural" analogies, based on Barth's definition of natural theology:¹⁵

the doctrine of a union of man with god existing outside God's revelation in Jesus Christ.

Oden notes that there is no difference between Barth and the process philosopher, Hartshorne, on the "essential direction of analogical thinking,"¹⁶ that is simply from God to people and never without that divine initiative of disclosure. The same can be said, of course, for Oden and Ogden, both seeing God's activity as grounding and sustaining human knowledge and enterprise. Oden's statement that "God is known only in his self-disclosure and that we have no 'point of contact' other than that given by God himself"¹⁷ is perhaps not as controversial as it sounds. The crucial issue is to determine the range of God's "point of contact." As indicated in chapter one, Ogden sees God's points of contact to be "always and everywhere." In contrast, Oden holds to a "christological exclusivity,"¹⁸ which provides a required uniqueness to the Christian message.

¹⁵ Karl Barth, Church Dogmatics (Edinburgh: Clark, 1936), IV/I, 168, quoted in Thomas C. Oden, Contemporary Theology and Psychotherapy (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1967), p. 127.

¹⁶ Oden, Kerygma and Counseling, p. 134.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 128.

However, though by faith one sees God at work in the counseling process, faith is in no way a condition of God's acceptance. God's acceptance is of "cosmic scope"¹⁹ and not limited to believers. After reviewing the Pauline understanding of salvation, Oden states:²⁰

This is our exegetical basis for viewing the setting of unconditional acceptance in effective psychotherapy as a radical verdict which is finally rendered not merely by the believing or disbelieving therapist but primarily by God himself and not only toward the individual but finally toward the whole of history.

It seems at this point that Oden has applied to psychotherapy and the encounter movement the kind of positive analysis that Ogden has delineated in his understanding of the relationship of God and the secular. Both have attempted to clarify the transcendent ground of apparently secular enterprise. Also, at this point, we would note the parallel here to Bultmann's positive valuation of existential analysis and the parallels Bultmann draws between it and the New Testament proclamation.

18

Thomas C. Oden, "The Alleged Structural Inconsistency in Bultmann," Journal of Religion, XLIV, 3 (July 1964), 199.

19

Oden, Contemporary Theology, p. 125.

20

Ibid., p. 126.

Faith and the Counselee

The curious thing that happens in Oden's thought is that the implicit faith that plays such a vital role in the therapist's activity, suddenly disappears when we cross over to an examination of the person receiving counseling or therapy. The implicit faith of the therapist is the hidden power of therapy. Yet, when Oden examines the outcome of therapy--the recipient of therapy--this implicit faith disappears. Instead, one hears strictly of intrapsychic and interpersonal issues, the kind of focus which we joined with Hendrix, and, presumably, Oden in deploring.

The outcome of therapy is insight, and this, according to Oden, is to be "sharply distinguished" from revelation:

If theology emerges essentially in response to divine revelation, therapeutic growth emerges out of intrapersonal and interpersonal insight. . . . If the purpose of psychotherapy is insight into oneself and one's interpersonal relationships in order that one might come more adequately to function . . . , the purpose of theology is clarification of faith's understanding of the divine self-disclosure which enables the sufferer to perceive himself and his neighbor anew from the vantage point of God's own care and love for man amid the limitations of his existence.²¹

This statement seems to overlook his earlier statement that "all human action is based on some self-understanding involving implicit metaphysical, ontological, and cosmo-

²¹

Ibid., p. 33ff.

logical assumption"²² Thus, if therapy yields a new self-understanding, it must also include new "metaphysical, ontological, and cosmological assumptions." If anything, Oden, who has done so much to clarify the transcendent dimensions of therapy himself, is here found hard at work burying the evidence he otherwise works so hard to uncover.

It may, indeed, be the case that Rogers and others have paid no need to the implicit ontological and theological claims that come to expression in the words and actions of those listed among the ranks of "successful cases" in a therapists's files. It is another matter, however, that Oden who has traced so carefully those same unexpressed claims in the words and actions of the therapist, should overlook them in the words and actions of the counselees. It is interesting to note the clarity he brings to the implications of the therapist's activity while making it a point to deny that the same implications accrue to the recipient of therapy.

In his later book, The Intensive Group Experience, he does recognize, grudgingly, that the awareness that characterizes those receiving the benefits of secular help includes a transcendent dimension:

Admittedly a diffuse awareness of the trustworthiness of being itself can be mediated through interpersonal relationships without the kerygma, i.e., without the church's specific witness to the self-disclosure of God in history. It is not necessary for groups to become overtly kerygma-

22

Ibid., p. 21.

tic in order to experience that trust. The kerygma, however, does complete a circle that is begun by the intensive group experience.²³

Nevertheless, even in this writing, he finds other ground to defend the "uniqueness" of the Christian message and community.²⁴

A second, and parallel inconsistency is found in the statement of Oden's hypothesis in Kerygma and Counseling:

. . . the psychotherapeutic process, although distinct from revelation, implicitly presupposes an ontological assumption--Deus pro nobis--which is made explicit in the Christian kerygma and clarified in faith's response to revelation, and it is therefore possible by means of the analogy of faith to perceive Christologically the so-called secular counseling situation as the arena of God's self-disclosure.²⁵

The difficulty in this proposal is the initial qualifying phrase that seems to undercut the remainder of the statement. That is, how can one describe the "so-called secular counseling situation" as the "arena of God's self-disclosure," while at the same time, in the same sentence, describing the psychotherapeutic process as "distinct from revelation"²⁶

The proposal uses the term, "psychotherapy" in the initial clause and the term, "counseling," in the final clause and distinguishes their meaning in the following paragraph. However, Oden clearly intends to draw no significant distinction, as if psychotherapy were further from God's activity than counseling.

²⁴
Ibid., p. 95.

²⁵
Ibid., p. 17.

²⁶
Ibid.

Oden is not, however, unaware of the difficulties in attempting to distinguish between "God's self-disclosure" and "revelation." The next section outlines Oden's attempts to clarify this distinction.

The Undelivered Message

Oden, himself, states quite clearly the difficulty involved in his project of clarifying "the distinction between man's self-knowledge and the divine self-disclosure:

If the self is understood by definition, as unavoidably standing in relation to the One who gives it life, then understanding of oneself must in some sense be an understanding of that ultimate reality which is the ground and source of selfhood.²⁷

However, it is precisely this connection that Oden attempts to deny. He argues, as stated above that the outcome of therapy is to be understood strictly as "insight" which is²⁸ purely an intrapsychic and interpersonal issue.

One way out of this difficulty is the special caveat Oden employs later in defining revelation:

27

Ibid.

28

It is this connection that Schubert M. Ogden, *Christ Without Myth* (New York: Harper & Row, 1961), p. 148, describes as the defining characteristic of existential interpretation: "every assertion about God is simultaneously an assertion about man and vice versa," quoting from Rudolf Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1951), I, 191. It is this proposition that Oden otherwise continually defends and illustrates.

In our discussion, revelation refers not to the general usage of the term, but to that unique self-disclosure of divine forgiving love which Christian worship celebrates.³⁰

This definition, however, has no more than tautological significance: psychotherapeutic experience is distinct from revelation because revelation is defined as referring only to "that unique event." Further, that definition makes absurd any talk of counseling as the "arena of God's self-disclosure." Oden has made clear that the "unique event" refers to the historic Christian community, but certainly not to so-called "secular" enterprise that lies outside that community as indicated above.³¹

Christology and Counseling

Oden's doctrine of revelation and Christology bear centrally on the issue of the appropriate analysis of the secular enterprise of counseling and its relation to Christian faith.

In Oden's response to Ogden's critique of Bultmann's project of demythologizing,³² Oden defends his mentor by

30

Oden, Kerygma and Counseling, p. 34.

31

Supra, p. 66.

32

Oden, "Alleged Structural Inconsistency," pp. 193-200, critiquing Schubert M. Ogden, "Bultmann's Project of Demythologization and the Problem of Theology and Philosophy," Journal of Religion, XXXVII, 3(July 1957), 157-73.

gently chiding Ogden for Ogden's suggestion that "in Bultmann's view, faith is a result of the event of Jesus of Nazareth, specifically understood as historisch." Whether or not Bultmann's view of faith demands an historisch base, it is certainly the case that Oden's does. He continues to argue that the church, understood as an historic community observably distinguishable from secular groups, carries a message that enables a self-understanding not otherwise available to people.

It is also to this "event" character that Oden turns in defending the distinctiveness of the kerygma:

The uniqueness of the Christian koinonia is that here, from time to time, the word of God's acceptance is announced not merely as an idea in our heads but as an event in which we share.³³

Again, Oden seems to be drawing a kind of Maginot Line to ward off the secular invaders.

The kind of breakthrough from talking about things to experiencing present realities, far from being uniquely an experience of Christian koinonia, is the staple fare of secular encounter groups.

If Oden intends something more than the claim that within the church our interchanges move beyond what Gestalt

33

Oden, Intensive Group Experience, p. 95.

therapists call "aboutism"³⁴ he has not made that clear.

Another distinction that Oden employs involves seeing insight, the engine of therapy, as an active mode and revelation as a passive mode of activity:

In achieving insight, one grasps, whereas one is grasped by revelation

In every case revelation differs from psychotherapeutic insight in that the initiative for self-disclosure is not within the self but comes to the self as a gift of the initiative of another.

Surely, there is also a passive element in any insight and an active element in any revelation. Indeed, Oden, in the latter portion of this chapter argues that rather than distinct styles of knowing, there are distinct elements in a single process of knowing: "Revelation is related to insight as speaking is to hearing."³⁶

What is apparent throughout is Oden's attempt to preserve carefully the uniqueness and necessity of the Christian proclamation, as the condition of any authentic existence. This is a judgment that is continuously unimpressive, in the light of the extensive material he himself develops in clarifying similarities between what happens in therapy and encounter groups and Christian life.

34

Erving and Miriam Polster, Gestalt Therapy Integrated (New York: Bruner/Mazel, 1973), p. 9f.

35

Ibid., p. 34.

36

Ibid., p. 82.

Oden is forthright about his concern: "But it is clear that if full-functioning is achievable allegedly "without revelation," then it would seem that the very raison d'etre of the kerygma is outmoded."³⁷ By the italicized phrase "without revelation" he clearly intends "without kerygmatic proclamation." It is against this view of revelation that Ogden has directed his energies.

The latest position Oden takes is that expressed in Intensive Group Experience that the Christian proclamation provides a clarity that is otherwise unavailable:

. . . The trustworthy reality that the (secular) group vaguely experience. (my emphasis)

To be sure, those who hear the kerygma have the richer possibility of receiving Christ's community in a larger form of reference. 38

Here the emphasis is on the relative clarity of insight offered through the kerygma, rather than the total absence of such insight, as in Kerygma and Counseling. What is, however, also unclear is precisely how, in existential terms, the self-understanding which the kerygma makes possible differs from that of secular encounter groups or the other secular enterprises Oden has examined.

37

Oden, Contemporary Theology, p. 119.

38

Ibid., pp. 95, 97.

It is precisely this lack of clarity that protects Oden's position from further criticism. At the points wherein he does become precise about distinctions between kerygma and therapy he opens himself to self-contradiction.

What we have attempted to develop here is a critique of Oden that parallels Ogden's critique of Bultmann. Oden has defended Bultmann from Ogden's critique at precisely the point we have attempted to criticize Oden: at the point of what Oden refers to as "Christological exclusiveness."³⁹

BASIC CHRISTOLOGICAL ISSUES

At the point of Christology, we see that Ogden and Oden have differed in print: the issue of Christology as developed through their differing critiques of Bultmann's program of demythologization.

We shall begin by a closer look at Ogden's critique of Bultmann, along with Oden's response. While we have described Ogden's Christology briefly in terms of what he affirms, it is important here to clarify exactly what he denies.

Ogden's Critique of Bultmann

In Chapter one of Christ Without Myth, Ogden outlines two requirements for an adequate post-liberal theology: one, that it comprehend the contemporary issues, and two, that it be

39

Oden, Contemporary Theology, p. 119.

40

"internally self-consistent." It is the latter requirement which Ogden sees to be the failing of Bultmann.

Ogden holds that Bultmann's proposal for a genuinely post-liberal theology can be summarized in two propositions:

(1) Christian faith is to be interpreted exhaustively and without remainder as man's original possibility of authentic historical (geschichtlich) existence as this is more or less adequately clarified and conceptualized by an appropriate philosophical analysis.

(2) Christian faith is actually realizable, or is a "possibility in fact" only because of the particular historical (historisch) event, Jesus of Nazareth, which is the originative event of the church and its distinctive word and sacrament.⁴¹

Oden quarrels with Ogden not so much about the second proposition, but the first, denying that it adequately represents Bultmann's position.

Aside from the question of Bultmann's own views, it is clear that Oden affirms only the latter proposition while Ogden affirms only the former.

40

Ogden, Christ Without Myth, p. 17ff.

41

Ibid., p. 122. It should be noted that Ogden and Oden employ the widely used convention of employing the two German words, Historie and Geschichte to distinguish between the publicly observable element of history (Historie) from its significance, (Geschichte) understood to be non-observable. cf. Van A. Harvey, A Handbook of Theological Terms (New York: Macmillan, 1964).

Resolution of this dispute requires an explanation of the word "myth," as seen by Bultmann. It is (1) treating the divine as if an object of sense experience and, (2) people as if open to the incursion of transcendent powers that implies a dual-track understanding of human events. Both instances entail an objectification of the transcendent, which as described above,⁴² misrepresents the divine quality of that transcendence. The disagreement between Ogden and Oden is whether Bultmann intends that there be any exceptions to this principle. Behind this question, there is, of course, the larger question of whether, Bultmann or no, such exceptions are warranted. For instance, the claim that "he (Jesus) ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of the Father" is a mythological statement, the real purpose of which is to speak of Jesus' decisive role in representing our relationship to God and not a Superman story from long ago that, unlike Superman stories, we are to believe. While this instance may depict a more readily acceptable illustration, the same principle of interpretation applies to other instances of Biblical materia. To restate the issue, do theological claims intend to provide us with information, or challenge the way we understand the meaning of our lives? The answer for Ogden is clearly the latter.

⁴²

Supra, pp. 42-54.

Ogden argues that it is Bultmann's view (and an important and correct view!) that there must be no limit to the scope of demythologizing or existential interpretation. He quotes Bultmann's claim that "one must either accept or reject the mythical world-picture as a whole."⁴³

Again, the reasons put forward for this radical stance are two. First is the demand for intellectual integrity. Either mythology is meaningless and offensive and to be eliminated or we must sacrifice our intellectual integrity in order to be Christians. Second, and more importantly for Bultmann, demythologizing is required by the New Testament itself.⁴⁴ This is because the contradictions in the Scripture can only be resolved thereby. The major contradiction is the Scripture's inconsistent view of human freedom. At times, passages describe life as strictly determined and at other times, human freedom is at the very heart of the Scripture's address. Bultmann contends that it is the passages that see us as free that immediately grasp us and are determinative for a proper understanding of the Scripture.

43

Rudolf Butlmann, Kerygma and Myth (New York: Harper & Row, 1961), quoted in Christ Without Myth, p. 38.

44

Rudolf Bultmann, Kerygma and Myth, p. 11ff.

Bultmann and Ogden are both clear that the issue at stake here is fundamental: the nature of our salvation.

A blind acceptance of the New Testament mythology would be arbitrary, and to press for its acceptance as an article of faith would be to reduce faith to works.⁴⁵

The call for radical demythologizing is necessary to avoid making of salvation something to be earned--and earned through the strange sacrifice of our personal integrity and honesty. This is the issue which Bultmann himself has pointed out and the principle to which Ogden insists Bultmann remain true.

Bultmann, of course, is all too aware of the difficulties in maintaining this view and doing justice to the Scriptural claims that Jesus is the Christ, and his own questions point to the difficulty he has in undertaking the task.

It is Oden's contention that Ogden misrepresents Bultmann's intention by this first proposition:

In nuce it is with Ogden's definition of "christian faith" that we are compelled to disagree, since he defines Christian faith in a reductionist fashion as "nothing other than a possibility of existential self-understanding."⁴⁶

Oden makes the obvious point that Bultmann nowhere describes Christian faith as separable from the specific events of Jesus and the church's testimony about him. He argues further

45

Ibid., p. 4.

46

Oden, "Alleged Structural Inconsistency," p. 196, quoting from Ogden, Christ Without Myth, p. 112.

that Ogden's criticism of Bultmann would leave Bultmann an "existentialist deist."

Oden argues as if Ogden denies that Bultmann held the view that Jesus plays an inescapable role in authentic faith. In fact, Ogden's question is not whether Bultmann holds that view, but how he can consistently hold it together with his demand for existential interpretation. Oden's argument takes the form that Bultmann cannot accept proposition A since there are numerous cases where he states proposition B. The implication is, of course, that if he did so he would be contradicting himself, and Bultmann would not contradict himself. That, of course, is what must be established.

Oden denies Ogden's claim that there is an emerging consensus about the inconsistency which Ogden claims to have found in Bultmann. He argues that nowhere in the literature is there to be found "where Ogden's specific inconsistency is framed,"⁴⁷ and scoffs that Ogden has lumped together a diverse group of scholars. He fails to understand that what Ogden has done is summarize a conversation and isolate the basic issues. The question is not whether his summary appears elsewhere, but whether it accurately describes the issue at stake between Bultmann and his critics. Further, Ogden's point is that the critics are united only in seeing Bultmann as inconsistent.

⁴⁷
Ibid., p. 194.

Ogden argues that there are the two contradictory threads he summarizes in the propositions above. One need only refer to Bultmann's own statement:

Whatever else may be true, we cannot save the kerygma by selecting some of its features and subtracting others. . . . The mythical view of the world must be accepted or rejected in its entirety.⁴⁸

Bultmann would, it seems, prefer Ogden's criticism to Oden's defense, since the latter seems to overlook the radical seriousness with which Bultmann sees the task of demythologizing.

Ogden's criticism of Bultmann is directed essentially toward the "Christological exclusivity" in Bultmann's thought. Since Oden affirms this dimension of Bultmann, Ogden's critique applies equally to Oden.

The problem of consistency arises because Bultmann insists on maintaining the native link of the life of faith to all persons:

Faith is not a mysterious supernatural quality but the disposition of genuine humanity. Similarly, love is not the effect of mysterious supernatural power, but the "natural" disposition of man.⁴⁹

On the other hand, faith is realizable only in response to the proclamation about Jesus. (Though the eye-witnesses could respond directly to Jesus, in our time, we are addressed by the saving word through the church's proclamation).

⁴⁸

Bultmann, Kerygma and Myth, p. 9.

⁴⁹

Ibid., p. 26.

Aware of the difficulties, Bultmann introduces the distinction between "possibility in fact," and "possibility in principle." He argues that authentic existence has always been a possibility in principle, whereas only in and through the ministry of Jesus does salvation become a possibility in fact. Oden has joined Bultmann in affirming the distinction and finds Ogden obtuse for denying it.

Ogden's argument makes two important points: one, that the distinction is vacuous, or two, if maintained, it undercuts essential elements in the gospel message.

Ogden argues that if people are responsible in "principle," but not "in fact," for realizing the possibility of authentic existence, then they are, in fact, not responsible for realizing that possibility. The argument here is a strict tautology. If authentic existence is not a genuine possibility, then people are not responsible for realizing it, under the Kantian principle Du kannst, denn du sollst (You can, since you should). The principle is as Ogden says, self-evident. Further, if authentic existence is not possible outside Christian faith, then Scriptural claim of universal accountability is untenable.

Oden, nevertheless, employs three arguments to refute this principle.

First, he argues that while the possibility of actualizing faith as authentic existence is continually present, nonetheless, "the self-assertiveness which makes him [man]

think he can achieve authentic life on his own is what prevents him from achieving it."⁵⁰ In other words, like Bultmann, Oden is arguing that the reformation doctrine of radical fallenness requires the conclusion that authentic existence is, in fact, realizable only through Jesus Christ.

Ogden's answer is the essence of simplicity: if we are radically fallen, the only way we can be saved is by God's grace. The principle of radical estrangement, only excludes the possibility of persons themselves acting decisively for their own salvation. It places no limits of any kind on God's action--which is precisely the effect of the argument of Bultmann and Oden. I shall return to this point later.

Second, Oden turns for support to Reinhold Niebuhr's⁵¹ position which he summarizes in the statement, "sin is inevitable but not necessary." Ogden's position about such statements is clear. He would, no doubt, ask the question of whether theologians are exempted from the responsibility of avoiding self-contradiction. If not, the statement, even from as venerable a figure as Niebuhr must be seen as absurd. If so, then meaningful discourse has already been abandoned.

50

Oden, "Alleged Structural Inconsistency," p. 197.

51

Ibid., in which he quotes Reinhold Niebuhr, Nature and Destiny of Man (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1953) I, 241-60.

Third, Oden protests what he takes to be the unbiblical individualism that he believes is entailed in Du kannst, denn du sollst. He also inexplicably argues that such "individualism . . . fails to correlate with . . . existential anthropology!" How, exactly, this statement is "individualistic" is not clear. It appears that he is arguing that while such a statement would be true if persons, in fact, lived in isolation from one another and could be understood apart from their neighbors, that since persons, as the Biblical witness shows, can only be understood in a social context, the statement loses force. That is, since we participate in the "fallenness" of the race, responsibility is no longer to be perceived individually. His statement follows:

Every man participates in the total fallenness of man [Adam], although no single one is in an individualistic sense responsible for the whole, yet in another sense everyone is responsible for sharing, perpetuating and elaborating the whole history of human estrangement.⁵²

If Oden wishes to make a case for corporate and individual responsibility, he is not exempt from the law of noncontradiction. We are as individuals "responsible" for "the whole," or we are not. He is not free to argue for two mutually exclusive propositions. That he understands himself to be doing theology does not thereby elevate nonsense to the exalted plane of "paradox." The task before us all is a more careful description of freedom and responsibility.

52

Oden, "Alleged Structural Inconsistency," p. 198.

Perhaps more important are Bultmann's own reasons for clinging to the principle that authentic existence is a "factual possibility" only in Jesus Christ. Bultmann's own view is that "philosophy is saying the same thing as the New Testament and saying it quite independently."⁵³ Bultmann chides his critics for failing to see the seriousness of the issue. His response affirms that the reason philosophy can do so is that the life of faith or authentic existence, as the New Testament witness describes it, is "the disposition of genuine humanity."⁵⁴

Bultmann argues and, as described above, Oden agrees, that, in contrast to philosophy, the New Testament holds that persons are not capable of overcoming their alienation and realizing authentic existence. Instead, the New Testament proclaims, not an idea, but an event in which God has acted to overcome our alienation--the event of Jesus the Christ.

However, Ogden points out that Bultmann [and Oden] presents a false dichotomy. What is required by the claim of the universal fallenness of humanity is not that people can only be brought to authentic existence through Jesus Christ, but rather, that only God can enable the life of faith. The further conclusion of Bultmann restricts God's freedom to save, to bring life apart from the history of Jesus.

53

Bultmann, Kerygma and Myth, p. 25.

54

Ibid., p. 26.

He argues that not only is christological exclusivity not required by affirmation of universal fallenness, but it positively violates Bultmann's own notion of the nature of theological judgments:

For under what conditions could it be established scientifically [and since it is an "objective" proposition, this is the only way it could be established] that it is only as faith in the Christian kerygma that authentic self-understanding is actually realized? Could any other standpoint than that of the One "unto whom all hearts are open, all desires known," conceivably suffice to confirm such an absolute assertion?⁵⁵

Oden's criticism that Ogden fails to take the kerygma⁵⁶ "seriously" at least implies that Ogden is abandoning the faith under pressure from contemporary thought-patterns. While taking contemporary thought and life seriously is something Ogden is proud to admit, there is another motive that Oden's critique overlooks.

That motive is the clarification and defense of divine and human freedom. Ogden sets forth his discussion of demythologizing as a defense of what he sees to be critical elements of the New Testament proclamation.

The same affirmation that denies human freedom to trust God apart from Jesus Christ at one and the same time would limit God's freedom to save.

It is Ogden's view that the radical connectedness of God's activity and possibilities of our understanding our-

55

Ogden, Christ Without Myth, p. 119f.

56

Oden, "Alleged Structural Inconsistency," p. 195.

selves is rooted in the Biblical message. He takes seriously the claim that

The sole norm of every legitimate theological assertion is the revealed word of God declared in Jesus Christ, expressed in Holy Scripture, and made concretely present in the proclamation of the church through its word and sacraments.⁵⁷

Commenting on Romans 1:20f, he notes that

Paul does not say that the original revelation of God in the things that have been made discloses merely the "concept" of God. . . . or something less than a full and perfect knowledge of him. In other words, Paul's conviction, like that of Scripture as a whole, is that men are utterly and radically responsible because God has always made himself known to them as gracious father.⁵⁸

ORIGINAL AND SPECIAL REVELATION

In Contemporary Theology and Psychotherapy, Oden argues that authenticity can never be fully actualized in the therapeutic relationship.⁵⁹ In so doing, he places a limit on God's graciousness. He also creates an offense to modern people both within and without the witnessing community. There are two main points we would make about Oden's understanding of counseling.

First, Oden has contributed to the delineation of how counseling fulfills what Ogden defines as the religious function. In showing how counseling, therapy, and the intensive

⁵⁷

Ogden, Christ Without Myth, p. 138.

⁵⁸

Ibid., p. 142.

⁵⁹

Oden, Contemporary Theology, p. 119.

group experience function to establish confidence in persons out of an implicit trust in the ontological ground of that confidence, he has thereby assisted us in delineating how counseling and/or psychotherapy is a religious quest.

Second, he has, with his own project, shown the problems in drawing back from claiming fully that counseling, indeed is such a quest (at least those enterprises that value insight). As Ogden criticized Bultmann for inconsistency in his project of demythologizing, for parallel reasons, we find Oden's project in rapprochement inconsistent.

Oden's later position, as expressed in The Intensive Group Experience approaches the position of Ogden, recognizing a "diffuse" or "vague" ontological trust occurring in counseling. As stated earlier, Ogden distinguishes "top of the head" and "bottom of the heart" faith, a far more useful conceptuality for understanding the relationship of Christian faith and secular counseling.

The crucial point is that unfaith, like faith is a phenomenon occurring at two essentially different levels of human life. At the deepest level, it is not a matter of self-conscious disbelief, but is a more or less conscious misunderstanding of one's own existence as a person.⁶⁰

It is to this "more or less conscious misunderstanding of one's own existence" that insight-oriented counseling is directed.

60

Schubert M. Ogden, The Reality of God and Other Essays (New York: Harper & Row, 1964), p. 23.

For this enterprise, counseling in its manifest forms has all the light it needs:

The only necessary, but also sufficient condition of the possibility of authentic faith is that original presentation of God to man which is constitutive of all human existence.⁶¹

Whatever else counseling may entail, it certainly includes the close examination of human existence. Like any other event, counseling contains within it the possibility of being revelatory.

Any event, whether intended by anyone as symbols or not, can become such an act of God. [An event which "manifests God's characteristic action as Creator and Redeemer] insofar as it is received by someone as a symbol of God's creative and redemptive action.⁶²

Though additional arguments may be mustered to establish the special role that counseling may play as an occasion of revelation, they are, by Ogden's understanding of revelation, unnecessary in order to establish the potential revelatory possibilities of counseling. Such arguments certainly include, but are not exhausted by, Oden's description of counseling as an event in which the counselor, by his/her acceptance of the client, mirrors the Divine acceptance,⁶³ without the necessity of Christian language or symbols.

Oden's views on the relationship of theistic language and counseling have remained largely unchanged over the years since the publication of Kerygma and Counseling. In his ad-

⁶² Ogden, Reality of God, p. 183.

⁶³ Oden, Kerygma and Counseling.

dress to the 1979 Annual Conference of the American Association of Pastoral Counselors, his discussion of the relationship of Christian proclamation is essentially a condensation of the views outlined there. In this lecture, Oden asks:

But why even preach, if the accepting reality is fully present in so-called secular relationships? and since further, Paul (Ro. 10:12) indicates God's universal presence?⁶⁴

His answer is that the Pauline theology suggests that the Gospel functions to bring to clarity the always present love of God in which all persons already exist. His position, as stated here, is quite consistent with Ogden's and inconsistent with his denial that counseling can be a revelatory event, and the denial of authentic faith apart from Christ.

He goes on to affirm that "overt, clear, decisive proclamation" is necessary for faith, quoting Paul:

faith comes from what is heard and what is heard comes by the preaching of Christ.⁶⁵

This sounds as if he is reaffirming the structural limitation of counseling as revelatory event.

It is interesting that he does not include the succeeding verses in his discussion:

But I ask, have they not heard? Indeed they have; for "Their voice has gone out to all the earth, and their words to the ends of the world."⁶⁶

64

Thomas C. Oden, "Recovering Lost Identity," Address to the Plenary Session, Annual Conference, American Association of Pastoral Counselors, Washington, D.C., April 21, 1979.

It appears clear that Paul is using the words "hear" in a significantly different way in verses 17 and 18, ways clarified by Ogden's distinction between existential, "bottom of the heart" hearing and reflexive, "top of the head" hearing. For Ogden, all of us have been existentially addressed by the voice which has gone out to all the earth; the Gospel invites us to understand existentially and reflectively, that voice through its witness to Jesus and the Christ.

Indeed, Oden himself seems to affirm this:

The nub of this issue is whether divine acceptance must be mediated verbally, or whether it can be authentically mediated non-verbally through an interpersonal relationship. Our argument hinges on the assumption that liberating divine acceptance can be mediated concretely through interpersonal relationships without overt witness to its ground and source, although it [presumably, divine acceptance] from time to time seeks to clarify its ground and source.⁶⁷

The distinction between "non-verbal" and "verbal" communication approximates the distinction we have already drawn between existential (or pre-reflexive) and reflexive response.⁶⁸

It is the primal "voice" that Ogden describes as "original revelation. . . . the original presentation of God

65
Romans 10:17

66
Romans 10:18

67
Oden, "Recovering Lost Identity."

68
It is interesting to note that Oden argues that the non-verbal communication of acceptance comes only through the relationship with the counselor and not through "the voice [which] has gone out to all the earth"---For instance, the person's encounter with previously unnoticed but meaningfilled

to every human understanding."⁶⁹ It is the existential understanding of this original revelation which is the "constitutive event of human existence,"⁷⁰ While this understanding may be authentic or inauthentic, and while it may be adequately or inadequately considered reflectively, it is this response which constitutes human existence and establishes the universal possibility of authentic faith. In Ogden's opinion the "decisive" or "special" revelation of Christian faith is "the representation of God to men that has taken place and continues to take place through the particular strand of human history of which Jesus of Nazareth is the center."⁷¹ While for Ogden this dimension of revelation plays a decisive role alongside, or more properly, in response to, original revelation, we note that, for Oden,⁷² "special" revelation is the only kind of revelation.

As we have seen, however, this is more than a verbal convention for Oden, since he argues, further, that because authentic faith is only possible in response to revelation, as defined, authentic faith is not possible in the secular counseling situation, or anywhere else, apart from the Christian community.

possibilities in his/her own history, or in the case of marital and family counseling, the same possibilities in their relationships to significant others.

⁶⁹ Ogden, "On Revelation," p. 268f.

⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 266.

⁷¹ Ibid., p. 269.

⁷² Supra, p. 69f.

In terms of the basic concern of this study; to clarify the function of religious language in counseling, I have attempted to show that specifically theistic language is not necessary in counseling to establish the possibility of authentic faith. Authentic faith is a possible outcome whether or not theistic language is employed, and, indeed, whether or not specifically Christian faith is espoused by counselee or counselor. Authentic faith is a possible response in counseling because of the everpresent graciousness of God which is constitutive of every event in our lives.

Before turning to the central function that special revelation (and hence, theistic language) hold and their possible relationship to pastoral counseling specifically, it seems important to draw together some positive conclusions about the counseling process.

It is apparent from the foregoing that counseling, in all its manifestations is a struggle of faith and unfaith, a struggle for an appropriate self-understanding. Persons come to counseling facing a boundary situation that threatens their self-understanding--their way of articulating their life's worth and meaning.

In every age, men have set out on pilgrimages, on spiritual journeys, on personal quests. Driven by pain, drawn by longing, lifted by hope, singly and in groups they come in search of relief, enlightenment, peace, power, joy or they know not what. Wishing to learn, and confusing being taught with learning, they often seek out helpers, healers, and guides, spiritual teachers whose disciples they would become.

The emotionally troubled man of today, the contemporary pilgrim, wants to be the disciple of the psychotherapist. If he does seek the guidance of such a contemporary guru, he will find himself beginning on a latter-day spiritual pilgrimage of his own.⁷³

This is true, not only for the individual seekers, but also for "groups"---those who come to find healing for broken relationships---marital, familial, or other. The alienation from the other is a threat not only to the relationship, but also to their confidence in their life's worth and meaning. This loss of confidence we have shown to be, implicitly, alienation from God.

It seems likely that it is precisely this characteristic of the counseling process that has played so prominent a role in attracting clergy. Supposedly, free from all the pedantry which reflects the church, counseling has appealed to many as a more vital kind of ministry, even though its relationship to the church's purposes were only vaguely drawn. In fact, secular counseling has seemed in many ways, to offer the counselor a greater authority to enter into the depth dimension of people's lives than has the ministry; the latter seeming to offer the role of cult functionary or a markedly temporary role as crisis counselor in the face of illness, death, or severe emergency.

73

Sheldon B. Kopp, If You Meet the Buddha on the Road, Kill Him! (Ben Lomond, CA: Science and Behavior Books, 1972), p. 1.

This not altogether illusory promise perhaps only points out an inadequate conception of pastoral care on the part of parish clergy or a timidity in accepting the authority of the pastoral office.

Hendrix, in suggesting a new paradigm for pastoral counseling makes clear that it is not so much the pastoral counseling process that needs to be changed, but our understanding of it. For example, he suggests that the current paradigm of counseling describes counseling as a priestly function,⁷⁴ an "insider" with preserving, tending functions. He calls for a new paradigm of counseling as prophetic, by outsiders, pained by the failings and tragedy of the given situation. However, he goes on to say, "The prophetic dimension of contemporary pastoral counseling is expressed by what counselors actually do and what counseling actually is. It is expressed when counselors invite people to disbelieve what they have been taught to believe, to renounce the life-style they have been offered. . . ."⁷⁵

Oden has, perhaps, devoted more energy than any other current theologian to understanding the theological roots and significance of counseling and to characterizing rather

74

Harville Hendrix, "Pastoral Counseling: In Search of a New Paradigm," Pastoral Psychology, XXV, 3 (Spring 1977), 158ff.

75

Ibid., p. 160.

than caricaturing the varied expressions of this broad and amorphous field. Yet, finally, his theology inconsistency leads to a failure to describe appropriately the theological significance of counseling.

In an age of secularism, an essentially religious process has been paraded as a strictly secularistic process. The task of pastoral counselors is not to make counseling into a religious enterprise, but to recognize its thoroughly religious character. Its task is not to introduce religious language to the counseling process, but to critique the religious language currently used in counseling. Certainly such secular counseling enterprises provide a limited resource--impacting people, generally, on a markedly limited time scale, and on a limited number of relationships. The secular counseling enterprise usually has no songs to sing or stories to tell, as does the church. More than that, however, is the more central task of critiquing the religious language we see being used in counseling. Our task, first of all is to be crystal clear ourselves about the fundamentally religious quality of the counseling process as we have learned about it in counseling offices, retreat centers and mental health facilities everywhere.

This task necessarily leads to a second and more problematic issue: the critique of that same religious enterprise in terms of its adequacy in accounting for the experienced significance of these enterprises.

With this final section, we come at last to a consideration of the possible positive role that explicitly theistic language might play in pastoral counseling. For this reason, we turn again to Ogden's description of the role of "special" or "decisive" revelation, as described in the essay, "On Revelation."

As noted above, Ogden holds that original revelation provides the full and sufficient ground for authentic faith. We have seen in his critique of Bultmann how Ogden resists any qualifications or dilution of this claim. He opposes throughout any attempt to suggest that the specifically Christian revelation in any way discloses anything of the Divine intention not already given in and with existence as such. It is important to note, however, that the term, "authentic faith," applies strictly to what was described earlier as "bottom of the heart" faith, which is characterized as existential and more or less conscious.

As this might lead us to suspect, Ogden agrees that the decisiveness of the Christian revelation centers in its claim to provide decisive reflective clarity about our existence as human beings, leading our lives before God's original self-disclosure.

As the base of every religion, as its origin and principle, is some particular occasion of insight, of reflective grasp through concept and symbol, of the mystery manifested in original revelation.⁷⁶

76

Ogden, "On Revelation," p. 283.

The necessity of special revelation is rooted in the nature of human freedom:

Man cannot merely live his life, but must lead it as well, and to this end needs to lay hold of his understanding of himself and of the reality encompassing him in explicit thought and speech.⁷⁷

Faith is an issue, not only at the bottom of the heart, but also at the top of the head. Being free and responsible means that persons are, of necessity, called to make a self-conscious decision about the meaning of their lives. Decision entails an understanding response. Hence:

Although such [Christian] revelation cannot be necessary to the constitution of human existence, it can very well be necessary to the objectification of existence, in the sense of its full and adequate understanding at the level of explicit thought and speech. . . . Whereas original revelation, we may say, is immediately and proximately necessary to man's authenticity, decisive revelation is only mediately and remotely necessary to it, being necessary in the first instance not to the constitution of his possibility, but to its full and adequate explanation.⁷⁸

Ogden notes that the distinction employed here is
⁷⁹
 borrowed from Wesley in Wesley's discussion of faith and works. For Wesley, faith is immediately and proximately necessary for salvation, while works are only "remotely necessary." Ogden argues that Wesley's understanding re-

⁷⁷
 Ibid., p. 283.

⁷⁸
 Ibid., p. 28.

⁷⁹
 John Wesley, "The Scripture Way of Salvation,"
 in Wesley's Standard Sermons (London: Epworth Press, 1921),
 II, 451f, 456f.

quires a parallel understanding of revelation: faith is to works as original revelation is to the decisive revelation in Jesus Christ.

Thus, special revelation plays no casual or incidental role, as if the reflexive function were an optional appendage in precisely the same way that "good works" are not optional for salvation. As the objectification of God's revelation, "it is the representation of his love itself as the ever new gift and demand of my existence,"⁸⁰ and, thereby, evokes the "good work" of adequate understanding.

It is important to note that, for Ogden, original revelation is an event, not a "timeless truth"--the decisive event in that it is an occurrence that is "received and some-⁸¹ how responded to understandingly as gift and demand."

Counseling is just such an enterprise in which certain events in persons' lives are examined and/or reexamined in such a way that the counselees receive and respond to those events as determinative for their lives--both as gift and demand. The events may be from one's history or part of the present moment. Nonetheless, the counselees decide that in this event, the truth about their life is laid bare.

80

Ogden, "On Revelation," p. 287 (my emphasis)

81

Ibid.

It might be argued that such a description of counseling is overly dramatic. For instance, it might be argued that people come to counseling sometimes for reasons similar to those of a person seeing a doctor for a cold: not a matter of ultimate significance, but a matter of convenience. As stated in the introduction, no attempt is made to measure empirically the depth of concern of people coming to counseling. I have simply chosen to trust the overwhelming impression I have that most people who enter into an insight counseling relationship do so out of a profound sense that they are there to deal with issues of the ultimate meaning of their existence. My impression is that, lacking such an understanding, they either do not come at all or quickly decide to stop coming.

This is not to question that there are behavioral problems, for instance, overeating or even drinking, concerning which people sometimes seek help without a sense that their life's meaning is threatened. I would also include in this category most T-group and growth group members whose goal is increased behavioral skills. It is my therapeutic bias that people come most frequently because of what Satir refers to as low self-esteem and which I have interpreted as the need for reassurance about their life's worth and meaning which reassurance successful insight counseling provides.

Another category includes those persons who come to counseling neither for insight nor for behavioral modification, but for emotional support. Persons seeking emotional support are basically satisfied with their understanding of their life and their behavior and wish only confirmation from an understanding listener.

The distinction between this category and persons interested in insight counseling is that, for the latter, the something "bothering them" is experienced as demanding new insight and new behavior as well. The case studies which follow clearly fall into the latter category.

The function of decisive revelation in the counseling process resides in the clarification of the existential truth claim of the counselee. The counselee has the unavoidable task of understanding the nature of newly-experienced confidence in life's worth and meaning. The preceding argument has shown that confidence in life's worth and meaning may be authentically grounded in the "real whole" of which we experience ourselves to be a part on an existential or pre-reflective level, along with an inadequate reflective account of this experience, shaped by secularistic thinking. Indeed, the possibility of a renewed faith experience is basic to the vitality of the counseling experience.

However this final section has argued that the lack of reflective clarity is not a matter about which the coun-

seele can afford to be indifferent. The lack of clarity about that confidence can lead to questions of existential significance. The task of the case studies which follow is to illustrate the inherent religious significance of the problems dealt with and the importance of reflective clarity about that religious significance.

This process of confirmation and clarification is fundamentally the task of the counselee as is the case with every person. This task of understanding one's existence is unavoidably one's own. For this reason, though the pastoral counselor may hold that the event(s) described constitute(s) the original presentation of God to the counselee, and, further, that this same event is decisively re-presented in Jesus Christ, the response of existential self-understanding and the task ("work") of clarification and confirmation remain, finally, with the counselee, while the pastoral counselor's task remains that of mid-wife.

Chapter IV

CLINICAL EXAMPLES

The case studies which follow are slightly fictionalized accounts drawn from my own clinical experience. They are employed here to provide illustrative examples from which to draw conclusions about authentic faith, reflective clarity, and the religious language in the counseling setting. First, I shall describe each case, and follow with a clinical and theological interpretation of each. I will then lay out a sketch of clinical guidelines for the use of religious language and then conclude with a comparative analysis of the use of religious language and how it bears on the issue of reflective clarity.

CASE STUDY #1

Helga and Gary are a couple who came to counseling because of their marital conflict. Helga is 33 and Gary is 28, and they have been married for five years. They have no children and, at the time of the initial appointment, both were employed by the same bank, though in offices in different cities. Both were finding a high degree of stress in their work as they advanced to more responsible and higher paying jobs.

Both have high school diplomas and have attended night school courses, chiefly as avenues for advancement in their work.

Helga is from a midwestern, Anglo family and Gary, a Mexican-American, was raised in Southern California. They met in a large midwestern city where they were both employed in the same bank. At that time, Gary was in a custodial position, while Helga was a clerk. After their marriage they moved to Southern California and currently are buying and living in an upper-middle class home in a growing suburban community.

Helga was raised in a Nazarene parsonage; Gary was raised a Roman Catholic. Religion is a major factor in both their lives and especially in their marriage. Accommodation in this dimension of their lives was a high priority in the total scope of their marriage. Gary made the judgment that Helga's religious life was more important to her than his was to him. He intends to honor the promise, made to Helga prior to their marriage, to support her in her religious practice. As a result, they both worship regularly in a Nazarene church, though only Helga is a member. She, alone, also participates in other church activities. Significantly, Gary reports that he notices that, in reciting the Lord's Prayer, he leaves off the ascription--"For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever"--following his Roman Catholic upbringing.

At the time of the initial interview, Helga was on disability leave from her work, following surgery nine months prior. Her physicians had advised her that her slow recovery seemed to have a psychological basis and advised counseling. The surgery had been for the removal of benign tumors. At the time of the surgery, Helga experienced her job as highly stressful.

The precipitating factor in her seeking counseling, however, had been a severe quarrel with Gary in which Gary had struck Helga. Though Gary had struck her on at least two previous occasions, this time Helga sought counseling, and, eventually, persuaded Gary to join her. She first sought help at a facility for battered wives, from which she was referred to our Center. They apparently thought the degree of violence did not warrant her admission to their facility, at which there is a long waiting list.

Helga came to the first interview alone and just prior to leaving for a trip to the Midwest to visit her family and to sort out the recent events of her life. At that point, Helga was unsure whether Gary would be willing to come and what her course of action would be if he did not. Her initial focus was on the conflict between her perception of their deep love for each other with the reality of their quarrels and fighting. She mentioned the feedback she had received from friends that indicated that at least one friend perceived them as an ideal couple--deeply loving and

caring for others. She mentioned Gary's gifts of flowers, which she received warmly. She reported that Gary began shoving her about nine months into the marriage. She also recalled three specific instances in which he struck her, the first of which was two years prior, the second approximately three months prior, and the last, two weeks prior. She reported that Gary drank occasionally, and while this was offensive to her, she saw it as a relatively minor element in their fights.

Though there was another individual interview with Helga after her vacation, it was seven weeks from the initial interview to the first joint interview. At this time, during which Helga remained in the room throughout, Gary spoke of the importance and difficulty of coming to counseling.

Looking back, I notice that I neglected my usual procedure in such situations. That is, I normally spend time alone with the partner (usually, the husband) whom I have not interviewed. The significance of this is, in my view, that we three acquiesced to their need for maintaining a united front. Characteristically, Helga speaks for both of them in a manner like, "We agree that. . . ."

Gary stated that it was painful and difficult to recognize that he "had problems." He expressed a profound sense of guilt over his treatment of Helga. This was accentuated in his mind, because of her deep love for him, and, indeed, his love for her. Gary also emotionally described

his deep fears that his actions might lead to "losing" Helga. He also described his repeated guilt feelings over earlier fights, along with his apparent inability to break out of the pattern of hostility and remorse.

Their initial assignment was to count the instances in the week that followed that they had differences of opinion. My impression was that they had great difficulty in assimilating their differences, interpreting the differences as a threat to their relationship.

As the sessions unfolded, an important early issue was, for Gary, the development of trust in me, as a pastoral counselor. As he stated later, he expected to be lectured and scolded. This fear was accentuated when, in waiting for our initial session, he was able to overhear the loud argument of a couple in the session preceding.

As his trust developed, he found himself relieved to be able to discuss issues troubling him. The first of these was his own conflict over their agreement about worship practice. First, while he was willing to attend worship with Helga, he found distasteful the Bible study which preceded it. Helga wanted him to attend, but he resented what he perceived as coercive behavior from other class members. Further, he found himself missing his own tradition: he longed to attend Mass.

Gary was profoundly surprised that he was able, in Helga's presence, to air his feelings and concern. This was the first breakthrough for him. He had apparently harbored these feelings for some time and had believed that to air them would cause severe damage to their relationship.

In fact, they were able to renegotiate their contract on this matter rather easily. Gary now attends Mass during the Bible study and returns to worship with Helga later at the Nazarene church.

They both report that this arrangement has worked out satisfactorily in the intervening weeks. Further, Gary has reported finding himself less intimidated by the Nazarene congregation and more appreciative of the Nazarene worship and minister. (A further development is described below).

Later sessions focused on other issues under the same theme of permitting conflict to surface. One of these was the distribution of household chores. Gary preferred an inside/outside distribution: he to do the yard work, and Helga to clean the house. Helga preferred a team approach--both of them to share in both jobs. Helga chided Gary for being bound to traditional roles--the man disdaining housework as a woman's job. (In fact, she recognized that Gary did regularly help with housework and took it over almost entirely during her illness). Gary found himself reluctantly agreeing that he didn't like the prospect of friends coming by the house to find him doing housework.

However, as conversation progressed, each was able to bring into sharper focus what they wanted. For Gary, yardwork was a chance to be alone--a precious commodity to him. Rather than protesting this, Helga reported that what she wanted was an opportunity to be outside.

As in the previous issue, Gary discovered he was able to articulate his need for distance in the relationship without threatening his concomitant need for closeness and intimacy. While the counseling session itself did not yield a specific contract as in the previous issue, there was a marked decrease of tension. Gary did express a willingness to work on his "hang-up" about housework. Helga agreed to manage the housework in such a way that there would not be an overwhelming amount to do on weekends to alleviate Gary's resentment about needing to do housework instead of having free time.

As these negotiations continued, Helga found herself increasingly freed from worrying about Gary's hostile responses. She characterized herself as previously monitoring herself to avoid hostile reactions from Gary.

During the course of our sessions, both Gary and Helga changed jobs. Gary acquired a position with a retail firm closer to home. This significantly reduced his commuting time. In an individual session, midway through our course of interviews, Helga pursued issues related to her work goals. (Gary did not attend the session due to work).

Helga rehearsed her parental expectations about succeeding at her work. They had urged on her a professional career. For herself, she described a significant shift in her own "perfectionist" expectations of herself.

Their purchase of a home had given her a new sense of security. She reported her unhappiness over her childhood experience of moving from house to house as her father's assignment to new churches dictated.

In that context, she described glowingly her fantasy about being a parttime check-out clerk in a grocery store. Far from being a shock to her self-image, she found appealing the relatively low demands and the increased possibility for time at home.

She described herself as an active person, who would not be satisfied with the role of housewife alone. She currently plans to remain employed in her new, less-pressured work. In fact, her new job is not as a grocery clerk, but as an employee in a retail firm where she has a variety of tasks, but more amiable relationships and work she enjoys.

Both have expressed some reluctance to have children, due to financial concerns. I can only speculate that an additional factor is the lack of adequate emotional security. Neither articulates any reluctance, on principle, in having a family.

As we experimented with new methods of handling conflict, the issue of Gary's typical use of anger and hostility came into focus. Having explored his guilt and regret over his hostility and his apparent inability to control his anger, he began to contact in his life history ways he affirmed his use of anger and particularly his "smart mouth."

"I always had to get the last word in," Gary stated, in describing his relationship to his family of origin and in his adolescent peer relationships. He began to affirm his ability in verbal jousting, smiling as he talked. He also spoke of the value of speaking sharply and forcefully in his work. In his banking job and in his retail work, he functioned as a collection agent. This work, he explained, required an ability to speak sharply and firmly.

"But I can control my temper at work." With that, Gary's mood became more sober. The impression I had was one of sadness, as he pondered the need to restrict a way of behaving that gave him satisfaction.

During the course of our ninth session, Gary and Helga introduced their desire to move toward termination. The session focused on rehearsing our time together and the issues dealt with. At one point, I stated that I was interested in the area of religious language and counseling and that their answers would be helpful to my research. (I now see no need to rely on my own needs as a reason to invite such reflection). I then asked how they would interpret this experience in light of their religious faith.

Helga's response was immediate and forceful: "I think the Lord has been dealing with me." She described in detail how the Lord's "dealing" was calling her to new decisions about her life. First, she mentioned that she was praying more. She recognized that in the middle of this crisis, she needed to strengthen her church ties that had been less meaningful; that she needed to become more deeply involved in the life of her congregation or find a place where she could.

She stated further that she had "turned over to the Lord" the decision about her job. Through doing this, she found the courage to make the job shift.

Finally, she affirmed that she was deciding to trust God further in her relationship with Gary. She meant that she was more open to change and willing to face more realistically the realities of their relationship.

Her words flowed with energy and conviction. When she concluded, we sat quietly for a time. I then turned to Gary and asked, "Do you want to try to follow that?"

Gary appeared somewhat troubled and stated that he was not clear about the question. After I restated it, he declared that he understood and would respond. His statement that followed indicated that he had unfinished business with regard to his own religious life: "I've come a long way, but there's just a final step I'm not quite ready to take." He went on to describe his sense that he needed to

and was not quite prepared to make a religious commitment in a manner prescribed by the Nazarene tradition. At this point, I urged him to proceed carefully in order to be clear about what he genuinely wished to affirm. Helga reported to me that she had warned Gary that "the Devil would try to keep him from making his commitment to the Lord."

In my view, this is the central conflict between them. Helga is wanting Gary to adopt a style of life that she finds meaningful and Gary resists losing his own identity. At the same time, there are things he wishes to change in his life and he does want greater intimacy with Helga (as well as space and autonomy). The painful process for him is sorting out those elements in his background--a background shaped significantly by his religious heritage--which he is willing to discard and which he wishes to retain. Of course, the parallel process holds true for Helga as well.

Gary went on to agree that Helga was right, though he did not use her terms. No clear resolution of this struggle occurred, though both expressed a determination to continue.

I then noted that we had not talked a great deal in theological terminology and asked their evaluation. Helga's response was that she was quite aware that I was a minister and that was important in her choosing our Center. She described her fantasy that a psychiatrist would say to her, "You've got to forget this religion stuff and get down to

business." In contrast, Gary, as stated, anticipated that he would find it difficult to talk with me. As he described his experience, he stated, "That's what made me realize how much I loved Helga," meaning that if he were willing to do something that difficult, it indicated how much he wanted their relationship. The relative freedom from use of traditional theological language, he reported, helped set him at ease. He reported believing at the end of our initial session that he "could talk" with me.

Gary returned to the issue of his ambivalent feelings concerning his anger. In our previous sessions they had both described how he verbally abused Helga far more frequently than he physically abused her. He would, on several occasions, tell her he hated her, never wanted to see her again. Afterwards, he would retreat to remorse and guilt.

It was, for Gary, this issue that had been most important to him as we reviewed our time together. He was struck by the realization that he was at the same place he had begun: "I've always known I need to control my temper." What he reported as new was the seriousness of the issue.

As he described this growing awareness, Helga, in a newly softened voice, spoke of her need to stop dancing about on pins and needles, trying to avoid (and, no doubt, control) Gary's anger. She began to share a story of a time with a couple when, for fear of offending the others,

all four wound up eating at a restaurant none of them cared for. Smiling then, they described how they all discovered what they had done and agreed to be more frank about what they wanted with each other. The story stood as their paradigm of their own situation--neither expressing their real needs and winding up with neither one satisfied. Looking over her shoulder as she left, Helga said, "That was a power-filled session."

In the interview subsequent to the one described, I asked Gary and Helga whether they considered the final session of equal, greater, or lesser value than the preceding ones. This interview took place two weeks after the "final" or summary session. Their report was that it was of equal or greater value to them. In evidence, they reported their continuing struggle with settling differences and Gary's related struggle to come to terms with his own religious faith on an existential and intellectual level, along with Helga's struggle to allow differences to surface and to understand the theological significance of these struggles.

Gary reported that he had subsequently made an overt religious commitment that, for him, symbolized a decision regarding his own use of anger. He had responded to an altar call in their Nazarene congregation, "with tears in my eyes." He reported that, as a consequence of this, he was able in his work situation to handle his anger more creatively in a specific crisis that ensued.

After being sharply criticized by a subordinate for improperly managing his supervisory tasks ("How long have you been a supervisor." I've been a supervisor for twenty years!"), he found himself enraged. However, before leaving for work the following day, facing the necessity for some kind of "show-down," Gary reported that he decided to "trust the Lord" and not to employ a potent weapon in his aggressive armamentarium. He reported carrying through on this decision and managing the crisis in another manner.

At this point, the issue of autonomy came into focus. Had, in fact, Helga, with my cooperation, simply manipulated Gary into behaving her way? Had she finally corraled a maverick for the Nazarene church, and more importantly, coerced Gary into sacrificing his own individuality? There is a very definite sense in which Gary, himself, interprets his behavior as a response to Helga's request. He describes his own reluctance to make an overt religious commitment on the basis of his own anguish over the effects of his anger. The essential issue, for him, was how he would symbolize that decision: he detested the thought of being required to make a teary-eyed march to the altar before the eyes of the congregation. He reported that what freed him to do so was Helga's response that she did not care if he made his "commitment" driving down the freeway. He further reported their agreement that his decision had no direct bearing on the form of future worship practice.

Psychological Interpretation

The first thing I notice about this counseling is that it is not extraordinary or exotic. The conflicts are quite common and almost stereotypical. The ways of using and not using religious language are broadly characteristic of any number of persons seen at the Center. It is common that people come to the Center out of an expectation that their religious values will be honored. Nor is it unusual for clients to use theological language and discuss topics of religion.

In Gestalt terms, the pattern of interaction we see here is appropriately described as confluence.¹ Confluence is one of the ways people have of diverting their energy away from contact with their environment out of the expectation that such contact will have unsatisfying results.² This diversion of energy is called resistance and takes several forms. One of these is confluence.

Confluence is a phantom pursued by people who want to reduce differences so as to moderate the upsetting experience of novelty and otherness. It is a palliative measure whereby one settles for surface agreement, a contract not to rock the boat. Good contact, on the other hand, even in the deepest of unions, retains the heightened and profound sense of the other with whom contact is made.³

¹ Erving and Miriam Polster, Gestalt Theory Integrated (New York: Brunner/Magel, 1973), pp. 70-97, esp. pp. 92-97.

² Ibid., p. 70ff.

³ Ibid., p. 92.

In the case of Helga and Gary, they have had tremendous differences in background. They have struggled hard, and in large measure, have succeeded in overcoming these differences: different ethnic background, religious differences, and different geographic backgrounds. Certainly, also, different familial backgrounds, particularly at the point of dealing with angry feelings. Gary was rewarded in certain ways, for his explosive temper. Helga was trained at home to keep such strong feelings in check.

We might say that, given these circumstances, confluence is the appropriate choice of interaction. As the Polsters state,

An individual may choose purposefully to downplay differences in order to remain on the track of a more important objective and to resist irrelevant static. . . . This differs from confluence because the individual's sense of self is figural. It remains defined through his personal assent and the clarity of his awareness of himself and his environment. . . . Now if his life is crammed with the requirements for personal submergence, whether he likes it or not, it is obviously going to prove frustrating and unnourishing.⁴

This, of course, is what we see in Gary's and Helga's case. After continued surface agreement about religious practice, yard work, time alone, etc., he becomes tired of the lack of genuine contact with Helga as a separate person.

⁴
Ibid., p. 93

⁵
Ibid.

"Even if vaguely sensed differences may never have erupted into overt argument, there are signs of disturbance in confluent relationships. . . ."⁵ While in most instances, the differences were only "vaguely sensed," it is, in some ways, fortunate that Gary's disturbance did break into the open and shatter their image of themselves as an "ideal couple."

"Two clues to disturbed confluent relationships are frequent feelings of guilt or resentment." These "clues" are distinctly present, both in Gary's repeated guilt feelings and outbursts of resentment and Helga's feelings of being hurt and offended.

It is likely to assume, as her physician did, that Helga's illness was a psychosomatic symptom. We might theorize further, that her continued emphasis on her love for Gary is an expression of reaction formation:

A defense mechanism (used in situations where ambivalence exists) in which the ego protects itself from aggressive id impulses by the conscious emphasis of positive feelings, such as love, protection and tenderness.⁷

As noted in the definition, the feelings are ambivalent. In our work, then, I was careful to support Gary's and Helga's protestations of love: they are there. However, while she

⁵
Ibid.

⁶
Ibid.

⁷
Robert A. Harper, Psychoanalysis and Psychotherapy (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1959), p. 16.

did not express overt hostility to Gary, we can logically assume that if their relationship continues to grow, Helga will feel more free to express them, particularly if Gary lapses into old habits. Helga expressed her conviction that "it does no good to become angry with him--he just gets angrier." Her preferred response, at present, is distance--leaving the room.

A perspective on Helga and Gary from a family therapy viewpoint corroborates rather than conflicts with the example drawn earlier from Gestalt therapy. An example of a relational approach to counseling is the conjoint family therapy of Satir,⁸ who has argued that a conjoint family interview, focusing on family interaction, has marked advantages over individual therapy. It is also the case that relational approaches to counseling have quickly developed a widespread following.

Satir has described low self-esteem as a central element in troubled relationships--marital and familial. She theorizes low self-esteem to be associated with "great anxiety and uncertainty about [one's] self."⁹ She lists

⁸ Virginia Satir, Conjoint Family Therapy (Palo Alto: Science and Behavior Books, 1967).

⁹ Ibid., p. 8ff.

five manifestations of low self-esteem:

1. self-esteem is "to a certain extent" based on others and their opinions;
2. crippled autonomy and individuality;
3. behavior which disguises the low self-esteem;
4. impaired relationships with persons of the opposite sex;

and

5. failure to achieve autonomy from parents.

For people with low self-esteem, marriage, then, is to be seen as, at least in part, a quest for enhanced self-esteem at the great risk of losing self-esteem. This leads to the high priority placed in marriage of finding the partner who will enhance self-esteem and on disguising those elements in oneself that the person fears--on the one hand, "Each said, 'You seem to value me. . . I need you in order to survive.'" . . . On the other hand, "It was as if Joe said privately to himself: 'I must not reveal that I am nothing.'"

This leads to the fundamental problem of different-ness:

"When Joe and Mary discover, after marriage that they are different in ways which seem to take away rather than add to them, they see each other in a new light.

- a. 'Different-ness' looks bad because it leads to disagreement.
- b. Disagreement reminds them both that the other is not an extension of the self, but is separate.

Different-ness which leads to a conflict of interests (dis-

agreement) is seen as an insult and as evidence of being unloved."¹⁰

There are two reasons for this brief excursion into family therapy theory: one, to examine whether the paradigm of "Joe and Mary" is useful in describing Helga and Gary, and second, to demonstrate that theories' roots in the individual's quest for meaning.

This second issue needs only brief notation: it is obvious that, in Satir's theory, the quest for self-esteem mirrors that quest which Ogden describes as a fundamentally religious issue of finding "the hope which does not disappoint." The paradigm that Satir employs can only be seen, from Ogden's doctrine of God, to be an example of idolatrous faith--the quest for another person to provide that meaning. To "idolize" one's own partner is exactly that--to make an idol, as a source of meaning that is worshipped as the special access to life's worth and meaning.

We have already noted that Gary and Helga have submerged important differences in their struggle for a "good marriage." It also seems to be the case that as their self-esteem has grown, their differences are surfacing. Specifically, the purchase of a house, which means so much particularly to Helga, preceded this conflict. It seems logical to

10

Ibid.

assume, though they have not directly stated it to be the case, that their self-esteem has risen with that move, a sign of their union.

Theological Analysis

The basic theological rubric that seems applicable is, as mentioned above, Ogden's definition of idolatry as the designation of one of God's creatures as the sole sacrament of meaning. In the case of Gary and Helga, this idolatry can be described in several dimensions. First, it can appropriately be said that they have idolized each other: the counseling reveals an almost exclusive focus on each other. All the concerns which they present have to do with their relationship. They clearly have difficulty experiencing differences between themselves, without responding as if to a crisis.

It seems appropriate to say that both Gary and Helga have idolized their "perfect marriage." To this end, they together have shored up this idol's clay feet by submerging important differences between themselves and denying important parts of themselves.

Helga has tended to submerge her own need for just treatment in order to appease Gary and preserve the desired unity. On the other hand, Gary, who also finds great meaning in his "sharp tongue" has also assumed differences were

catastrophic. He was surprised that he could share religious differences with Helga--he clearly assumed to do so would cause some disaster. In this sense, Gary, too, participated in appeasement of Helga. When that became too burdensome, he resorted to another "means of grace"--his anger.

For both of them, their attachment to these idols prevents them from experiencing other behavioral options that actualize other meaning-filled possibilities. Gary seems to be becoming aware of some of these--the esteem-enhancing option of recognizing the points of difference between them and negotiating solutions that affirm their distinctive needs and values. Helga seems to be beginning to realize the possibilities of giving up responsibility for Gary's angry feelings and the related experience for her of being trapped and helpless, while constantly having to be on guard, in order to maintain the prized "unity."

11

Ogden states that "man has his own appointed ends in the total scheme of God's creative purposes; . . . this end is none other than the maximum realization of his distinctive possibilities, in which he fulfills his existence as creature."

It appears that it is this process of maximizing possibilities that we see in the ongoingness of Helga's and Gary's life as revealed in the counseling process. I am arguing that an appropriate interpretation of Gary's and Helga's behavior points to an underlying shift in their self-understanding that is an implicit statement of faith, a faith

moving from an idolatrous worship of a limiting (and limited) sacrament of meaning to an expanded view of their behavioral options and an implicit re-interpretation of the ground of their life's meaning. We have seen how, from Ogden's viewpoint, the option Helga and Gary have in understanding the meaning of their life (since they have found life meaningful, albeit a meaning threatened by the demands of their existential situation) is to place that confidence either in "the real whole of which we experience ourselves to be parts"¹² or to "divide [their] ultimate trust by placing it in part in some idol alongside [it]."¹³

They do have the option of deciding on a self-conscious level, that life is meaningless. For instance, Gary might decide that if his unbridled anger is futile and meaningless, that his life is meaningless. It seems appropriate to say that in the counseling session at least, that was not his (or her) decision. Far from expressing a sense of meaninglessness, their verbal and non-verbal communication expressed an enhanced sense of their life's meaning.

The further question that might be raised is whether or not Helga and Gary have decided to place their confidence

¹¹
Ogden, Reality of God, p. 227.

¹²
Ibid., p. 37.

¹³
Ibid., p. 24.

in that same "real whole." We already know, from an existentialist standpoint, that we cannot prejudge whether they will continue to decide to so understand their life. However, the question remains whether, in that moment--in the counseling session--they chose to understand their life in such a way that their confidence in their life's meaning is placed in God alone, or simply exchanged one idolatry for another.

We need to remind ourselves again that this decision, in Ogden's view takes place on two levels--"top of the head" and "bottom of the heart." We must remember, too, that these decisions need not be consistent: that is, conscious belief may be joined to existential doubt, and conversely, existential faith may be joined to conscious doubt.

In Ogden's view, for an observer, there is no ground for absolute certainty. Of the disclosure of another person through words and deed he states:

Who [the other] is for me is who I understand her to be in terms of certain quite particular events, having a 'once-for-all' historical character, that I take to be revelatory of her person and attitudes as they relate to me. It is true that my understanding of her is to some extent constantly changing in the light of new 'revelations' of her being and that I can never be absolutely certain she is as I understood her to be.¹⁴

Indeed, that uncertainty holds even, or better, eminently in the case of our "observation" of Jesus of Nazareth. It is to Jesus' "outer acts of symbolic word and deed"¹⁵

14

Ibid., p. 182. It seems likely, from his analysis, that the same uncertainty obtains for self-observation.

that we are called to respond as the decisive representation of the divine intention. We have no certain access to the
¹⁶
 existential faith of Jesus.

Accepting Ogden's viewpoint, then, there is a proper word of caution about our attempts to interpret the words and behavior of Gary and Helga: It is not ours to know, with certainty, these two people's existential faith. We note, in passing, that for other or similar reasons, many therapists also eschew the need and/or value of diagnosis in
¹⁷
 therapy.

However, having granted that there is a profound question about anyone's ability to judge the authenticity or inauthenticity of another, existential faith, I wish to suggest Gary, in particular, as a person who has actualized the possibility of authentic faith which, I have argued, is inherent in the counseling process.

Lacking certainty, there are words and actions which, as Ogden states, we do take to be revelatory of the intentions of others: those decisions "which express openness to

¹⁵

Ibid. (my emphasis).

¹⁶

cf., Schubert M. Ogden and Van A. Harvey, "How New Is the 'New Quest for the Historical Jesus,'" in Carl A. Braaten and Roy A. Harrisville (eds.) The Historical Jesus and the Kerygmatic Christ (New York: Abingdon Press, 1964), pp. 197-242.

¹⁷

In the section on Faith and Religious Language, I will examine their reflective beliefs.

all impinging influences or decisions on the basis of a more restricted sensitivity."¹⁸ I suggest there are abundant words and actions, particularly on Gary's part, that suggest a new and authentic existential faith: his new willingness to express differences with Helga suggests a greater openness to his life's possibilities. Likewise, his new behavior in his work relationship suggests a greater openness. I am also inclined to believe his decision to find a job closer home and the concomitantly greater time at home entails a greater willingness to permit the "impinging influence" of Helga on his decisions.

In this claim, I am viewing this counseling in a way parallel to Oden's view of the possibilities in, for example, encounter groups.

The trusting environment of a group with a high trust level is not based solely on the experience of being trusted by persons. Rather, it operates at the much deeper level of understanding the cosmic environment as trustworthy. This cosmic acceptance may not be articulated, but it is profoundly felt. . . .¹⁹

I am arguing that implicit in Gary's new behavior is a new-found confidence in "cosmic acceptance," not articulated, but "profoundly felt."

Because of this judgment on my part, Gary also stands

¹⁸
Ogden, p. 53.

¹⁹
Thomas C. Oden, Intensive Group Experience (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1972), p. 93.

as an appropriate illustration of the possible additional benefit of reflective clarity about the ground of his confidence.

CASE STUDY # 2

Carol originally came to counseling in a crisis over her second son's (age 17) behavior. Through the previous school year, Ricky's behavior had changed markedly. She was referred by a school counselor, who had called her in to discuss Ricky's truancy and failing grades. Ricky had dropped out of athletics, his grades had dropped markedly, and he was found by his parents to be drinking. He reportedly skipped school, and he frequently complained about the school, particularly student gangs. This initial interview took place in summer. When summer had come, Ricky had returned to the family's previous home in the Midwest, from which they had moved 2 1/2 years prior. He was staying with his paternal grandparents with hopes of staying to continue school where he previously attended.

The immediate crisis was precipitated by the grandparents' insistence that he return to California, since his behavior was objectionable to them and they found no way to control or negotiate with him.

Carol was leaving immediately to "vacation" there for two weeks and to bring Ricky back. She felt herself to be at the end of her rope, having exhausted her repertoire of

options and finding Ricky unwilling to communicate. Carol was quite agitated and tearful as she talked. She reported thinking that she and her husband had somehow failed as parents. She had banked heavily on Rocky's time away as a means of resolving their conflict.

We agreed to a family session upon her return to include Carol, Ricky, Harold, the father, and Hal, the older son.

Upon their return three weeks later, the session soon focused on the family's move and its consequences. (During the session itself some of the tensions and Carol's anxiety had markedly abated due to Ricky's increased willingness to communicate.) Ricky took the lead in articulating the pain of the entire family over the move. Though employment for Harold had been the expressedly dominant factor in the move, another issue had been conflict with both sets of grandparents and the adults' determination to free themselves from their parents' influence, particularly in Carol's case.

The changes, however, were many. Not only was Ricky moving to a new school and contact with unfamiliar Mexican-American teenagers and their culture, but also the change from a rural culture and extended family ties to an urban, multi-cultural setting with few ties beyond the nuclear family.

Further, Harold's new job entailed his working night shift, while Hal, with whom Ricky was very close, had graduated. In this setting, Ricky found himself radically cut off from the majority of significant relationships in his life. To top it all off, he experienced his mother, herself adjusting to a radical change, increasingly difficult to get along with. The family's realization of the great amount of change they had undergone was liberating to each of them. Ricky had himself become aware through his trip that, indeed, he could not "go home again," and clearly decided to make the best of his "new" situation. In light of that awareness, he pleaded for increased family time at some of their old hobbies--camping and biking. The rest of the family was more than willing to explore these options.

In a brief round of family interviews, the family dealt with their grief over the radical changes and accompanying losses they had experienced. They took stock of what adjustments were needed in this new life situation in a rather straightforward manner, with a minimum of interpersonal conflict or recriminations.

In the latter part of these discussions, Carol's pain in relating to Ricky came into focus. She discussed her sense of loneliness and insecurity as she faced the task of relating to her changing teenage son not only largely without the assistance of her husband, but also without support from her extended family and long-time friends. In the family's characteristically non-confrontive style, the others

gently called to her attention what they saw as her inappropriate anxiety and worry. The illuminating incident was an argument in which Ricky angrily slapped the kitchen counter. Carol reported being deeply distressed by the gesture. As she became clear about her fear of possible violence, her husband began to share for her her childhood history of physical abuse. The male members of the family clearly indicated their judgment that Carol had a "problem" about anger and violence. As her husband spoke, Carol wept. At the time, I had some fears that the family might be scapegoating out of the classical "hysterical female" ideology. However, Carol herself owned that she "had a problem" which she wished to work on. On the basis of her own interest and my own impression that the family males, indeed, had no history of violence and showed no indications in counseling of any uncontrollable anger, I agreed to work with Carol on "her problem."

As we began individual counseling, it soon became apparent that the family move had great significance as a breaking away from, or giving up on her mother. The move, for Carol, was largely a decision to stop hanging around in order to receive her mother's blessing.

She described, tearfully, the account of her being born out of wedlock and her mother's subsequent marriage to another man which occurred after her mother gave birth to a second daughter. She went on to describe her physical and

verbal abuse from her stepfather, whose frequent beatings were interspersed with demeaning statements about her birth.

Interestingly, nearly all of Carol's anguish, pain, and resentment were focused not on the "wicked stepfather," but on her mother, whom she blamed for marrying this cruel man. Not only was she troubled by her mother's passivity in the face of her cruel treatment, she was also deeply resentful of what she saw as her mother's lack of concern for Carol's children. She saw her mother's essential crime as the failure to care for and about her offspring. Carol described her mother as an alcoholic, consumed by her own problems. She was most deeply troubled by her inability to understand her mother's apparent rejection of her children, which she contrasted with her own deep affection for her own family. "How could she do it?" was her repeated question. As her children were born, Carol had hoped that she might share with her mother in enjoying and nurturing her babies. It was as if she hoped to garner for her children, or for herself through her children, the maternal blessing she had not received.

In the light of this history, it became clearer how Carol came to fear not only violence in her own family, but also any showing of angry feelings. Ricky's behavior had clearly upset that somewhat fragile family balance. It also became clearer that her focus on family harmony was in reaction to the disharmony in her family of origin.

While Carol had physically distanced herself from her mother, she found that she still was unable to gain emotional distance or autonomy. She described her conversation, during her return to the Midwest, with her younger sister. They had shared their related pain over their family history, and Carol received her sister's reports of her continued fruitless contacts with their mother. Carol's sister reported coming back from these encounters with continuing feelings of depression and resentment.

The dimensions of the problem for Carol were expressed in her statement that she did not know how she could "go on" without being able to understand or be understood. She stated, in reference to her struggle with her mother that, "You have to have something to live for." It may have been that, as we talked, the issue grew in significance in her mind, since she became increasingly agitated as she considered the continuing difficulty she experienced in gaining any understanding of her mother. She was clearly stating that the issue, for her, was about the fundamental worth and meaning of her existence. Further, she clearly linked that issue to her mother's acceptance, or failing that, find an excuse for her mother's failure to accept her.

As we discussed her history, Carol repeated again and again, with multitudes of variation, the same statement, "I don't see how she could do it," meaning treat her the ways she had done. I repeatedly understood her statement as a

question and invited her, again in a multitude of ways, to take on the role of her mother and respond to Carol's question. She repeatedly answered this was impossible. In the midst of the decisive interview, I invited her to entertain the possibility that such a struggle as I had been suggesting was fruitless. This side of her ambivalence grew stronger, though she questioned how she could put out of her mind the question she had about her mother. At the end of the session, I invited her to live simply with the possibility of never really understanding her mother nor being understood by her mother during the week between our sessions.

At the next session, Carol entered with markedly changed affect and behavior. She was more animated and quick-paced in her speech. She reported having been able, indeed, to live the week with the relinquishment of her hope of her mother's acceptance. Further, family relationships had continued to improve along with her confidence in herself as a mother and in her son. Her summary statement was, "I just decided that my mother has the problem; I'm O.K." She reported feeling increased satisfaction with her role as a mother and wife, that her family was what gave her satisfaction. I asked what she saw as her prospects as her younger son graduated the following year and eventually left home. While she has a job as a cook at a local college, she stated her most interesting prospects were in the more explicitly maternal role as neighborhood mother-surrogate. Her neigh-

bors, she reported, were largely families with younger children, the mothers of whom saw her as an old-timer to whom they could turn for support and guidance. While she didn't see this as a full-time occupation, she was pleased to see possibilities of herself as caring for both young mothers and their children. This apparently provided the opportunity to act out the role she had wished her mother had played toward her and her children.

Though I suggested further family counseling to solidify her changed perception of herself and to allow other family members to respond to this development, Carol saw no need to continue and reported the other family members felt the same. As a result, this was the final session.

Psychological Interpretation

In Gestalt terms, Carol's behavior in relation to her mother, and also less directly, to her son illustrates the form of resistance to contact known as projection:

The projector is a person who cannot accept his feelings and actions because he "shouldn't" feel or act that way. The "shouldn't," of course, is the basic introject which labels his feeling or action unpalatable. To resolve this dilemma he does not recognize his own mischief but instead attaches it to another person, certainly not himself. The result is a classic split between his actual characteristics and what he is aware of about them.²⁰

Carol continually was aware of her mother's rejection of her and was unable to understand it. All our efforts to

20

Polster, p. 78f.

enable her to understand her mother, failed precisely because Carol was not aware of and unable to deal with her wish to reject her mother and the life she led. The dominating introject was expressed in her revulsion at any act of rejection, apparent or real. Her childhood experience gave overwhelming evidence that rejection was a bad and deeply harmful thing. By extension, then, any angry act, like slamming the kitchen counter, was also bad and led to an impossible bind. How could Carol "reject" this threatening behavior of her son without becoming like her mother, a parent rejecting her offspring. The only option left was the hysterical anxiety and crying, to which she, indeed, resorted.

She began to own her projected feelings through deciding that, indeed, she could live without her mother's approval which she was clear was not forthcoming in any foreseeable future. Further, she changed her self-characterization. She had described herself as a determined person--determined to understand and be understood by her mother. However, as she looked at her sister and her sister's continued efforts to receive their mother's blessing, she began to see her sister, and by identification, herself, as foolish and inappropriately needy. In the jargon of psychotherapy, she stopped "giving away her power" to her mother.

While the changes that simultaneously were occurring in Ricky's life ameliorated her need to "reject" his behavior, one might hope that Carol would increasingly be able to confront Ricky, the other family members and the rest of her

world without overpowering feelings of guilt. That is, that she might make finer distinctions between her own behavioral options and those she sees as characterizing her mother. In simple terms, she might be angry without seeing herself as her Medea-mother.

Theological Analysis

Like the psychological analysis, this commentary can be rather simple and straightforward. Carol idolized her mother. Though certainly not in the sense of idolizing her mother's behavior, Carol nonetheless idolized her mother's power to bless her. She rather clearly saw her mother's acceptance as the necessary sacrament of the ultimate worth of her life. The change which occurred in her counseling was an emphatic idol-smashing. No longer would Carol worship at the feet of her quasi-divine mother; whose approval she so needed and whose rejection so paralyzed her.

Further, in Carol's case the central religious issue of reassurance about life's worth and meaning was the focal concern of counseling. She plaintively stated the issue as she described her struggle with her mother: "You have to have something to live for." Her affirmation that she could have "something to live for" without her mother's approval was therefore a clearly religious affirmation, despite the lack of any theistic language.

As with the case of Gary, I am suggesting that Carol provides a likely example of actualizing authentic faith in

the counseling process, as judged by the principle of making decisions which express openness to all impinging influences rather than on the basis of a "more restricted sensitivity."

The bases for this judgment are Carol's subsequent greater willingness to express her feelings openly with her family and the increased self-worth expressed in her subsequent decision to enter a management training program. In these actions, she has given up the restrictive sensitivity which led her to focus so much of her energies on her mother and in avoiding behaving in any way like her mother.

Further, there is no evidence that she has chosen to substitute an alternate limited sacrament of meaning--such as her family. It, indeed, appears that she has an increased appreciation for them. At the same time she is acting in a more autonomous way with them--being both willing to argue with them and able to find meaning for herself outside the family circle.

DISCUSSION OF CASE STUDIES

Clinical Function of Language of Reassurance

Before discussing the issue of religious language in these cases, it seems necessary to sketch the clinical warrants and cautions about the use of language of reassurance, that is, religious language.

The questions that seem important are essentially two:

1. Does this counseling process conflict with the traditional clinical concern for autonomy?
2. Does this counseling successfully focus on the ongoing experience of these people, or does it devolve to what Gestalt therapists refer to as "aboutism," intellectualizing that avoids a close examination of experience?

While in one sense all therapy places value on the worth and autonomy of the individual, there is a particular strand of psychotherapy, traceable back to Otto Rank and including at least Carl Rogers and Gestalt therapy, that provides not only an understanding of autonomy, but also a style of therapeutic intervention appropriate to such an understanding. The reason for selecting this strand of therapeutic theory is its valuation of persons as free and responsible. This choice is based also on my relatively greater acquaintance with this particular strand and does not imply that other strands of therapy, such as the school of European psychiatry called daseinanalysis (Existential Analysis), would not be equally useful theories for explicating a concern for human freedom and responsibility.

For Rank valuation of the autonomy of the individual means recognizing the creativity that is elemental of human existence and seeing the therapeutic task as the assistance in developing that same creative power.

The psychological understanding of the creative type and of its miscarriage in the neurotic, teaches us therefore to value the ego, not only as a wrestling ground of (id) impulses and (super-ego) repressions, but also as conscious bearer of a striving force, that is, as the autonomous representative of the will and ethical obligation in terms of a self constituted ideal.²¹

Psychotherapy can only be based on an individual psychology, that is, should strive to adjust the individual to himself, which means enable him to accept himself.²²

That is, psychotherapy must not be adjustment to some prevailing definition of "normalcy" or "rationality." The lack of adjustment of the individual to him/herself is seen by Rank as a failure to "allow a dynamic interplay of spontaneous forces"²³ the "natural" and the "human," the "irrational" and the "rational." Instead the person attempts through a non-creative use of will to adjust to some norm of what is human and rational. In fact, he criticizes most therapies for slipping to a notion of "normalcy" into therapy while pretending that it "promises to the individual self-fulfillment and autonomy."²⁴

Therapy is finally a self-help process in which the client does not need interpretation by the therapist since awareness of oneself was a continuing possibility.

21

Otto Rank, Will Therapy and Truth, and Reality (New York: Knopf, 1950), p. 213.

22

Otto Rank, Beyond Psychology (New York: Dover, 1941), p. 51.

23

Ibid., p. 47

24

Ibid., p. 46

Therapy is finally a self-help process in which the client does not need interpretation by the therapist since awareness of oneself was a continuing possibility.

It is the patient's verbalization rather than the therapist's explanation or interpretations which are therapeutic. The process is not a "making conscious" but a "becoming conscious." Thus the therapist's verbalizations should be aimed at stimulating the patient to talk. . . rather than at presenting the patient with a conclusion that might terminate such talk.²⁵

Rogers expresses the same confidence in the individual's ability to be self-regulating:

If I can provide a certain type of relationship, the other person will discover within himself the capacity to use that relationship for growth, and change and development will occur.²⁶

What is essential for therapy, according to Rogers is the therapist's ability to understand thoroughly the client's internal frame of reference, thereby freeing a person to understand himself.

Finally, Gestalt therapy also shares the aversion to therapeutic interpretation and confidence in the autonomous experiencing of the client:

Life is as plain as the nose on your face when you are willing to stay with what is presently clear. . . . Interpretations and symbolic equations are bold attempts at divination. . . . For the person observed it may offer illumination and sharp surprise. Aha! The risk is

25

Donald H. Ford and Hugh B. Urban, "Rank," in their Systems of Psychotherapy (New York: Wiley, 1963), p. 388.

26

Carl R. Rogers, On Becoming a Person (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1961), p. 33.

that one learns to mistrust the foreground and to depend on an external authority to explain reality.²⁷

It should be noted that all three share a common confidence that clients have the possibility of awareness of themselves and their world and the responsibility and freedom to understand it. The task of therapy, in each, is to assist persons in trusting their own awareness.

Following Oden's pattern of looking for implicit faith judgments in psychotherapy, we see in the non-directive, non-interpretive strand in psychotherapy an implicit faith not only in the persons' ability to be self-aware, but also in the availability of the existential truth about each person's life. It is just such an understanding that is articulated in Ogden's understanding of original revelation. The non-interpretive school of psychotherapy does not employ the idea of the unconscious or any other device employed in, for instance, psychoanalysis, to deny the availability of existential truth. As such, it provides a viewpoint at once consistent with Ogden's understanding of original revelation and skeptical about "interpretation" by the therapist, be it clinical or theological.

The second clinical issue is related to the first: the necessity of the intensified awareness of immediate experience and the concomitant avoidance of "aboutism,"²⁸ the kind of language that blurs contact.

²⁷
Polster, p. 46.

²⁸
Ibid., p. 9f.

In Rank's theory, the primary sign that therapy is working is the presence of self-affirming statements. In the cases studied, all parties increasingly employed self-affirmations that were congruent with their general affect. Their bodies and facial expressions loosened and their rate and volume of speech increased to a point more congruent with their words--they looked happier!

The Polsters describe this motoric response as a key indicator of enhanced contact:

Tension has its own directional power and . . . moves into the present by verbal eloquence, crying . . . and other expressive actions. . . . Completion emerges through recognition, enhancement, and continuing focus until motor discharge--available only in the present--finally releases the person from living in the dead past.²⁹

In sum, the outline of clinical warrants and concerns about the use of religious language are as follows:

1. Language which enables awareness by an individual fulfils a vital clinical function.
2. Such language is only valid as an element in the counselee's self-interpretation.
3. Such language is useful to the extent that it expresses a contactful awareness of the counselee's existential situation.

29

Ibid., p. 8.

Reflective Clarity and Religious Language: A Comparison

It is important to note that both the clinical and theological analyses above are my own and do not represent the reflection of the counselees. They serve, then, to guide my own reflection on the meaning of these clinical encounters. They are not intended as normative statements for the counselee's understanding.

We have both theological and clinical warrants to pay particular attention to the counselee's use of religious language as it has been defined in this study.³⁰ I shall proceed by making four propositions about the counselee's use of religious language and analyzing these propositions in turn.³¹

From the discussion above,³¹ we saw counseling as potentially the event of original revelation, the event constitutive of one's existential self-understanding. Further we have argued that these cases, in fact, realized this possibility through being the occasion in which these people came to a new, more authentic, self-understanding.

The first proposition is that while the counselees in the first study employed theistic language, both sets of counselees dealt with what are properly defined as "religious" concerns. In a very succinct way, Carol's affirmation that

³⁰
Supra, p. 133f.

³¹
Supra, p. 100f.

she is "O.K." indicates that she indeed had been reassured about the meaning and worth of her existence, and her words express a rudimentary kind of reflective clarity about her reassurance. Her subsequent statement, in a later interview carries the same message: "I look at myself in a different light." She reported this statement as interpretive of her new, more challenging, career goals. Further, her report of increasingly assertive action with other family members also suggests not only the fact of her having been reassured, but also sufficient clarity to transpose this experience into her most significant relationships and her work experience.

Second, in neither case does the understanding of the ground of confidence defined in the theology above, reach the level of reflective clarity, insofar as can be determined from their verbal reports. That is, in neither case do the persons self-consciously affirm the understanding that the worth of their existence is grounded in their unshakable participation in the life of God.

For instance, we have no report from Carol that she does not now understand her life's meaning to be grounded in the mutual love of her family. What we do have is a description of her new actions in relation to the family that at least imply her willingness to face the possibility of their partial rejection of her. The same ambiguity holds for other possible self-understandings available to Carol.

In the case of Gary's religious affirmation the same ambiguity applies, though in a less obvious way. He indeed affirms that he has consciously decided to "trust God." However, I now see that the existential significance of this affirmation contains a significant ambiguity. In the case of the conflict with his angry subordinate, his decision to "trust the Lord" contains at least two possible significations. First, it may mean that he may face the differences between them without resorting to manipulative anger because "the Lord" will make things "turn out all right." Or, secondly, he may mean that because he is the recipient of God's "pure, unbounded love," he may be confident of his life's meaning however things turn out. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego affirmed their confidence that the Lord was willing to deliver them from the fiery furnace (and perhaps from the hands of any fiery subordinates). However, they also affirmed their confidence in the Lord whether or not the Lord delivered them.

It should be clear that this ambiguity applies strictly to Gary's verbal report. We cannot judge his private reflection.

However, this illustration illuminates the clinical significance of just that reflective clarity that we have argued that decisive revelation provides. I would suggest that Gary's experience in counseling, that is, that dif-

ferences with a significant other (Helga) did not shatter the significance of his life, has important implications about which he needs reflective clarity. And if, for instance, Gary is familiar with the story of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, he might indeed find in it a paradigm for understanding his own conflicts.

Even if we grant, as I have done, that Gary and Carol actualized the possibility of authentic faith arising in the counseling setting, apart from reflective clarity, there remains, then, a significant task in achieving reflective clarity about their new-found confidence. That task is enhancing the transfer of an implicit, existential awareness to other life experiences. When people are reflectively clear that the ground of their life's worth and meaning is the unconditional acceptance of God they are in a better position to avoid investing their life's meaning onto some aspect or another of the manageable world.

If, for instance, Gary were to misinterpret his new-found confidence "in God," such that he believed God would arrange the successful outcome of his work conflict, then he would be investing the "successful" outcome of that controversy with an inappropriate meaning as sacrament or symbol of his life's worth and meaning. In clinical terms, it would mean that Gary would be continuing his pattern of interaction which we termed "confluence," the pattern of resisting contact with painful differences, submerging his own

agency in the expectation that his differences with his subordinate would be resolved through an outside agency.

In Satir's check-list of the measures of low self-esteem,³² we find "crippled autonomy and individuality." If Gary's "trusting God" meant that he felt God would manage his conflict, this would be an implicit denial that he himself could manage the conflict, and so, indicate crippled autonomy and individuality.

Another example is Oden's description of group trust and the experience of "the ontological ground upon which interpersonal trust is based."³³ If one is not reflectively clear about the ontological ground of group trust, it increases the possibility of investing the group itself with ultimate meaning. Indeed, Oden argues that such actuality is the case with the encounter movement in its tendency to "romanticize and exaggerate its own importance."³⁴ There is a wide-spread criticism of psychotherapy and the encounter movement that they do tend to create a dependency on the therapist or the group for one's worth and meaning. The task of reflective clarity is to ameliorate those and similar possible effects.

³²
Supra, p. 120.

³³
Oden, p. 13.

³⁴
Ibid., p. 138.

However, Ogden states that, ". . . it is always possible in a particular case that no real correlation exists between the reflective denial of God and the existential affirmation by which the person in question actually lives."³⁵ Of course the difference between beliefs and actions is a common clinical presupposition. For this reason, reflective clarity or the lack of it does not determine absolutely the possibility of transferring counseling experience to wider decision-making.

Nevertheless, the possibility of positive transfer beyond the counseling setting is greatly enhanced by just such clarity.

Third, the use of traditional theistic language did not, of itself, provide reflective clarity. As noted above, neither case illustrates the reflective clarity that decisive revelation may provide. In fact, Carol's case, in which no theistic language was used, more clearly focused on a religious issue than did Gary's and Helga's, in which traditional theistic language was used. Gary and Helga primarily wanted to "patch up" their marriage; Carol's concern was how to see her life as meaningful in the face of her mother's rejection. Carol explicitly was looking for "something to live for." Both cases were occasioned by interpersonal conflict. Both cases entailed an implicit

question of the ground of their confidence in life's worth and meaning, perceived as threatened by the interpersonal conflicts. Yet, in Carol's case the religious question became more clearly explicit.

Ogden has argued that "God must be so conceived that his being this ground of confidence is rendered as intelligible as possible."³⁶ If theistic language is to function so as to provide reflective clarity about the counseling experience, then it can be usefully employed to articulate the experience of new found confidence in one's worth and meaning. Though Gary talked about God, he did not employ God-talk to articulate the meaning of what he had experienced in counseling. The moment when he came closest consciously, to asking a religious question was in his wonderment at his own newly discovered ability to express differences with Helga. This experience was a source of new-found confidence for him. He was also surprised at himself and at what happened. Encouraging the exploration of that experience, which was already in focus for him, might have yielded a more sharply focused religious question and the possibility of reflective clarity.

This illustrates that the place of God-talk in counseling is at the point of clarifying the counselee's experience of confidence in life's worth and meaning. I have

³⁶
Ibid., p. 47.

already argued that the question of Gary's ability to deal with his differences with Helga was for him implicitly a question of his life's worth and meaning. To discuss simply the use of God-talk or invite God-talk generally, as I did, served no clinical function. Nonetheless, the invitation to explore more thoroughly his new-found confidence might have led not simply to a chance to use pious language, but to significant learning useful in dealing with broader issues of Gary's life.

Finally, these cases illustrate both the wide-ranging significance of reflective clarity along with the counselee's need for a broad range of conceptual and symbolic forms of expression. They need models that clarify what it means to be "O.K." in the various life experiences that threaten this budding confidence--models which focus their awareness and guide their action--models of what is and what ought to be.

Cobb has discussed the difficulty of using as models the strange language of the Biblical world in the arena of pastoral counseling.

There the world of the counselee must be taken as the basic context in which healing and growth are to take place. The counselor may help to expand that world through new insights, but to confront it with the biblical world is likely to be counterproductive."³⁷

37

John B. Cobb, Jr., Theology and Pastoral Care (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977), p. 60, cf. pp. 57-74 for a discussion of renewing Christian language in the counseling process.

It is instructive that the case he presents to illustrate the possibility of renewed use of biblical language in counseling has as its protagonists two seminary-trained persons.

The instruction I draw from it is that the possibilities of the use of the traditional resources through which decisive revelation is mediated are not only potentially valuable but also actually difficult to realize.

Through the analysis of the case studies, I have identified illustratively what I understand to be the nature of religious language in the counseling process and some of the problematic issues it raises. I am arguing, first, that by definition of religious language used here, religious language is an essential element employed in counseling.

A more common and harmful way to understand religious language is to equate religious language only with the use of traditional concepts and symbols which express theistic belief. Such an understanding of religious language is fundamental to Oden's theological critique of counseling. Given such an understanding, it is inconsistent that he does not endorse tacking such language on top of the counseling process. Fortunately, his understanding of clinical demands precludes such an option for him.

Second, this study has argued that religious issues, and hence, religious language are intrinsic to the counseling process and that the decisive or special revelation which we

affirm takes place in the history of Jesus, and the response of faith in him are necessitated by the need for reflective clarity about those religious affirmations which are occurring already in both theistic and, so-called, humanistic forms. I have earlier employed Ogden's understanding of God to suggest that the so-called humanistic affirmations of life and meaning are basically confused and incapable of providing adequately the required reflective clarity. Ogden has argued that humanistic faith is self-contradictory and incapable of providing an adequate account of human experience. I have employed the case studies to show that both a humanistic affirmation, such as Carols' and a more traditional theistic affirmation, such as Gary's both require more adequate formulation to make sense of their counseling experience and to use it for guiding their lives' decisions.

God-talk can provide reflective clarity about the counselee's experience of confidence in such a way that enhances the possibility of retaining that confidence in other life experiences without resorting to finding other props for that confidence.

Chapter V

IMPLICATIONS FOR PASTORAL COUNSELING

The basic question this study asks is the place of theological language in pastoral counseling. The answer is, it is important to know the words; it is still more important to know the tune. Secular counseling has been able to hum a few bars of its own and so pastoral counseling has been willing to learn from it about some tunes that, we have seen, have been around for quite some time--especially in our own songbook. Historically, pastoral counseling has tended to take the view that it is useless to know the words if you do not know the tune. My response has been that while that is true, you lose something by just humming all the time. What the Swingle Singers do is great; a good production of Handel's "Messiah" is greater still.

To those who have argued that secular counseling does not really know our songs, I have responded that indeed they do know the tune even if they do, like everybody, hit some rather sour notes. In the final analysis, Ogden says, there are no monotones. Our contribution to the music is the words that really fit the tune.

The basic implication of this study is that we need to develop ways to sing our story.

The therapeutic valuation of the immediacy of experience is granted theological warrants. If the pure unbounded love of God is the ground of our confidence in life's worth and meaning, the close examination of our life's experience has therapeutic and theological significance because God's love is implicit in that experience as the ground of its worth. Our lives are where God's original revelation takes place. If pastoral counselors have tended to focus on human events, that focus is seen to be appropriate because that is where the original revelation of God takes place.

The problem that pastoral counseling's use of secular understanding entails is the inadequate interpretation of those events which secular counseling has provided. This inadequate interpretation has led to a marked limitation in the pastoral counselor's ability to assist these counselees in adequately clarifying the broader significance of those events.

As stated, the primary implication of this study is that the essential task of the pastoral counselor is to assist the counselees in examining and reflecting upon their experience. If counseling, generally, is guilty of the widely-held judgment that it is inordinately privatistic, it simply reveals counseling's failure to enable persons to interpret adequately their experience.

The reflective clarity which theological witness may provide can only be useful in response to the counselee's felt need for clarification. When people want clarity about their experience, theological witness may be useful. However, the need for existential confidence precedes the need for reflective clarity about that confidence. The pastoral counselor does not introduce theological language. The counselee may introduce questions about the meaning of his/her experience, to which theological witness is an appropriate response. If the counselee is not ready to reflect upon his/her experience, it means (s)he has not yet become fully aware of that experience and the implicit word of God addressed to him or her within the confines of that experience.

When the symptoms that bring counselees to counseling are dissolved and the client has gained a renewed openness to the previously experienced threatening influences on his/her life, we may be justified in saying that a more authentic faith has arisen. When the client then asks the question of the meaning of this experience, the church's witness may enable reflective clarity that illuminates the broader implications of that experience and enhances the possibility of an existential openness to all the impinging influences of life.

Autonomy, Heteronomy, and Theonomy

The analysis of the case studies has included a theological justification of counseling's traditional defense of the autonomous process of the counselee. That process has been described as the arena of God's self-disclosure to the individual. Therefore, I have concurred in the judgment that theological reflection, or Godtalk, must not be employed in a way that intrudes on the autonomous process of the person.

However, the study also takes issue with any assumption that theological language is, of necessity, an intrusion on the autonomous process of the individual. The central point of Ogden's doctrine of God is precisely that an adequate and sufficient account of our experience requires that we take note of our original trust in God, a fundamental element of our experience. Further, the case studies have pointed out the clinical significance of the reflective clarity that was only partially realized in the case studies; the dangers of an ungrounded autonomy or of a heteronomous faith.

Pastoral counseling has been well aware of any threat to the autonomous process of the counselee from an intrusive use of theological reflection. However, it has, by and large, regarded the absence of theological reflection as a

matter of indifference. In the rubric of this study, pastoral counseling has been content with the goal of restoration of an existential confidence in life's worth and meaning. We have failed to address adequately the problems arising from the person's lack of reflective clarity about the ground of that confidence: the dangers of an ungrounded autonomy which is readily reducible to a new form of idolatry.

Again, the reflective clarity to which I refer occurs when the counselee sees that his/her newly-experienced confidence is grounded in the ever-present love of God which is present to ourselves and every other creature in each moment of our existence.

It is for Carol to be conscious that God's love for her is the basis upon which she has relinquished her attempt to secure her mother's love. It is for Gary to be aware that by trusting his unshakable significance to God that he is able to face his differences with Helga. Such clarity differs from affirming some generalized concept of the love of God. It is rather a clarity about one's own most significant experience. it is akin to Jacob's insight after his vision at Bethel that "the Lord is in this place; and I did not know it."¹

¹

Gen. 28:16.

The failure to address the issue of the ground of our confidence cannot mean that we act with no understanding of that ground. As Ogden has described, we shall act, more or less consciously, either out of confidence in God's pure, unbounded love alone, or out of confidence divided between God and some idol.

The function of reflective clarity is to provide that reflective clarity which may enable the person to transfer his/her learning to other experiences. As noted, without such clarity, Carol might interpret her new-found worth to be in release from the need for her mother's acceptance, but grounded in her functioning as a good wife and mother. To be reflectively clear that this is not the case, while not guaranteeing her existential decision, does enhance the possibility of her making further life decisions out of confidence in her worth based on God's love alone.

Tillich defines autonomy as "the obedience of the individual to the law of reason, which he finds in himself as a rational being."² By theonomy, he means "autonomy united with its own depth."³ Heteronomy is a threat to autonomy only when autonomy is separated from its depth:

²

Paul Tillich, Systematic Theology, I, p. 84.

³

Ibid., p. 85.

The problem of heteronomy is the problem of an authority which claims to represent reason, namely the depth of reason, against its autonomous actualization.⁴

He argues that it is a revelatory event that overcomes the conflict between autonomy and heteronomy, an event in which autonomous reason becomes aware of its own depth. It is this kind of event which successful insight counseling has been shown to be.

Simply stated, I am urging us, as pastoral counselors, to explore with counselees, to the extent that counselees are willing, the nature of their new-found or restored confidence in life's worth and meaning. The failure to address this issue is to ignore the transcendent ground of confidence that is implicitly present in the successful outcome of insight counseling.

The Style of Theological Reflection in Counseling

The task for the pastoral counselor, then, is to assist counselees in the creative act of articulating their experience through the witness of the church. While few hard and fast rules apply, it is clear that such articulation follows the main task of counseling: the close examination of experience, or "learning the tune."

⁴
Ibid., p. 84.

First, we should note that such reflection need not take place only at the conclusion of the course of counseling. As Gestalt therapy invites us to see, figure/ground inversion needs to have a certain plasticity. Experience and reflection need a kind of spontaneous flow. The moment for reflection, then, may arise at any time in the counseling, as a response to deeply-felt experience.

It is strictly a judgment call, also, as to the extent of theological reflection. Based upon whatever is figural for the counselee, the reflective interchange may require a sentence or may last through other sessions.

Second, we note that theological reflection depends, largely, upon the theological concepts, symbols, and practices that pre-exist in the counselee's perceptual field. Gary and Helga interpreted their experience in light of the constructs and practices previously available to them. While this did not preclude their development of novel constructs, these constructs were synthetic of their religious background.

Since the pre-existing symbol system of the counselee plays such a significant role in the place of theological reflection in counseling, it behooves the pastor to find out about it.

One question that it would be most helpful to ask is "Why did the counselee come to a pastoral counselor." Even if the religious identity of the institution or pastoral function

of the counselor is not a significant element in the counselee's choice, there remains a significant question as to the way the counselee regards churches, church institutions, and pastors.

Moreover, it seems advisable, for more than public relations purposes, to follow the practice of one counseling center with which I am familiar. There, they explore with local church pastors the distinctive concerns of various congregations bearing on issues of self-understanding and interpersonal relations and how these concerns are articulated and symbolized. For example, what are the special understandings of justice which these faith communities uphold? What do they acknowledge to be the rights of women, children and minority groups? What are the characteristic ways of expressing and symbolizing the faith? The range of relevant questions is as broad as the range of religious faith and practice.

Such questions make clear, further, that conflict of values between pastoral counselor and counselee, even, nay, perhaps particularly, among religiously committed counselees, is inevitable. Emphasis on autonomy and self-creativity does not, it should be seen, demand the submersion of such conflicts by the pastoral counselor. Unconditional positive regard means recognizing the meaning and worth of the individual, not an affirmation or even a suspension of comment about the coun-

selee's decisions. Indeed, the Rogerian demand for congruence recognizes the place of interpersonal conflict between counselor and counselee.

In the case of Gary and Helga, my uncomfortableness over their style of religious expression was relatively insignificant. If, however, I had decided that Gary's decision to make a public profession of faith were coerced, I would have believed myself to have both clinical and theological warrants for pursuing the issue further. He might have decided that such an act was necessary to gain Helga's approval. The clinical warrants in that case are apparent. The theological warrant, I take it, would be that such an act would constitute an idolatrous understanding of the ground of his life's meaning. Further, he might have decided that God wanted him to make such a commitment. In fact, such a determination is implicit in his decision. And in fact, we did examine how he understood that to be the case, in a brief and cursory fashion. We also decided, implicitly, that we had reached closure about an issue that provides an ongoing possibility of figure/ground inversion. As indicated in the discussion of Gary's religious affirmation, a novel element that was previously background material became figural for me. During my own reflection about the case I began to wish that I had asked Gary to clarify for himself how he "trusted God."

The potential range of religious language is as broad as the counselee's concerns and the counselor's ability to evoke questions in the counselee's own perceptual field. The limit is that field itself and its specific figure/ground configuration. We cannot resolve questions that are not being asked by the counselee. Hence, Carol, who explicitly asked an existential question is in a better position to actualize reflective clarity about those questions only implicit for Gary and Helga. For instance, the theological analysis of the case study above answers my questions and not Helga's and Gary's. There is no sense in which that theological diagnosis can play a normative role except for persons posing those questions. This is not to argue that the perceptual field of the counselee is a static given. Even for persons who profess no religious belief, we have seen that the necessity of making sense of their experience remains. Of course, as pastoral counseling has always held, this is their task and not the pastoral counselor's. Nevertheless, to invite "top of the head" atheists to make sense of their experience is not a violation of their autonomy, again, by either some good clinical or theological standards.

It seems somehow strange to need to tell pastoral counselors they have warrants to pray, sing songs, read Scripture, even dance if that fits their theological imagination. Yet, this is precisely the situation in which we find

ourselves at this stage of our history. For pastoral counseling to avoid the rich heritage of our Christian tradition seems almost perverse. It should be noted that I am referring here to pastoral counseling as it is generally written about and, at least, frequently practice. There are, indeed, many pastoral counselors who employ the language of our tradition in a clinically responsible way. However, the majority of our pastoral counseling literature and training seems to have given short shrift to the positive contributions of theological language. Understanding that contribution is an essential task for pastoral counseling.

Chapter VI

CONCLUSION

The conclusion of this study may be summarized in two propositions. First, all insight counseling is a religious enterprise, yielding the possibility of authentic faith.

Because God's love is the ever-present reality described, it is the implicit key to the resolution of the conflict-filled experience of counseling. When persons make decisions out of that implicit confidence in their life's worth and meaning which God's love provides, they are enabled to manage their intrapsychic and interpersonal conflict. Faith is implicit not only in the effective counselor, as Oden suggests. More importantly, when counseling succeeds, faith is implicitly present in the counselee. Failing to see this fundamental aspect of counseling leads to the unwitting depreciation of the counseling process by not only critics but pastoral counselors as well.

Second, appropriate theological analysis of that experience may enhance the possibility of transferring the authentic response from the specific conflict dealt with in counseling to the wider decisions of the counselee's life. Such reflective clarity that the church's witness may provide about the counseling experience, far from an intrusion on the validity of that counseling, honors it and enhances its significance.

I have argued that an existential faith response is possible because any event has the possibility of being the event of original revelation by virtue of God's everpresent love. However, since original revelation means that an event becomes determinative for one's existential self-understanding, reflective clarity enhances the possibility that the counseling event may become so determinative. If the counseling event is to realize the revelatory possibility described, the task of counseling is not complete until that event is understood in such a way that the light shed by it illuminates every aspect of the persons' life.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

A. PRIMARY SOURCES

1. Oden, Thomas C.

After Therapy What?: Lay Therapeutic Resources in Religious Perspective. Springfield, Il: Thomas, 1974.

Agenda for Theology. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1979.

"The Alleged Structural Inconsistency in Bultmann." Journal of Religion, XLIV, 3 (July 1964), 193-200.

Contemporary Theology and Psychotherapy. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1967.

Game Free: A Guide to the Meaning of Intimacy. New York: Harper & Row, 1974.

The Intensive Group Experience: The New Pietism. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1972.

Kerygma and Counseling: Toward a Covenant Ontology for Secular Psychotherapy: Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1966.

The Promise of Barth, The Ethics of Freedom. Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1969.

Radical Obedience, The Ethics of Rudolf Bultmann. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1964.

"Recovering Lost Identity." Address to the Plenary Session, Annual Conference, American Association of Pastoral Counselors, Washington, D.C., April, 1979.

The Structure of Awareness. Nashville, Abingdon Press, 1969.

"A Theologian's View of the Process of Psychotherapy," Journal of Individual Psychology, XXIX, 1 (May 1964), 69-78.

2. Ogden, Schubert M.

"Bultmann's Project of Demythologization and the Problem of Theology and Philosophy." Journal of Religion, XXVII, 3 (July 1957), 157-73.

Christ Without Myth: A Study Based on the Theology of Rudolf Bultmann. New York: Harper & Row, 1961.

Faith and Freedom: Toward a Theology of Liberation. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1979.

"Faith and Secularity," in Eugene T. Long (ed.) God, Secularization, and History: Essays in Memory of Ronald Gregor Smith. Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1974.

_____, and Van A. Harvey. "How New is 'The New Quest for the Historical Jesus,'" in Carl A. Braaten and Ray A. Harrisville (eds.) The Historical Jesus and the Kerygmatic Christ: Essays on the New Quest of the Historical Jesus. New York: Abingdon Press, 1964, pp. 197-242.

"The Meaning of Christian Hope," Union Seminary Quarterly Review, XXXIX, 2-4 (1975), 153-64.

"On Revelation," in John Deschner (ed.) Our Common History as Christians: Essays in Honor of Albert C. Outler. New York: Oxford University Press, 1975.

"The Point of Christology," Journal of Religion, LV, 4 (1975), 375-95.

"Present Prospects for Empirical Theology," in Bernard E. Meland (ed.) The Future of Empirical Theology. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969.

The Reality of God and Other Essays. New York: Harper and Row, 1964.

"The Task of Philosophical Theology," in Robert A. Evans (ed.) The Future of Philosophical Theology. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1971.

"Who Represents Christ?" Christianity and Crisis, XXIII (June 24, 1963), 115-8.

B. REFERENCES

1. Theology and Pastoral Counseling

Baillie, John. Our Knowledge of God. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1959.

- Baldrige, William E., and John J. Gleason, Jr. "A Theological Framework for Pastoral Care." Journal of Pastoral Care, XXXII, 4 (December 1978), 232-38.
- Barry, William A. "Prayer in Pastoral Care: A Contribution from the Tradition of Spiritual Direction." Journal of Pastoral Care. XXXI, 2 (June 1977), 91-96.
- Barth, Karl. Church Dogmatics. Edinburgh: Clark, 1938-1979. 4 vol. in 13.
- Browning, Don S. "Analogy, Symbol, and Pastoral Theology in Tillich's Thought," Pastoral Psychology. (February 1968), 41-54.
- _____. The Moral Context of Pastoral Care. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1976.
- Bultmann, Rudolf. Existence and Faith: Shorter Writings of Rudolf Bultmann. ed. by Schubert M. Ogden, New York: Meridian Books, 1960.
- _____. Kerygma und Mythos. Hamburg: Reich, 1951-52. 2 vol. Kerygma and Myth: A Theological Debate, trans. by R. H. Fuller, ed. by H.W. Bartsch. New York: Harper & Row, 1961.
- _____. Theology of the New Testament. trans. by Kendrick Grobel. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1955. 2 vols.
- Cobb, John B., Jr. Theology and Pastoral Care. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977.
- Evans, Donald D. "Pastoral Counseling and Traditional Theology." Scottish Journal of Theology. II, 2 (June 1958), 172-9.
- Gilky, Langdon. "A Theology in Process," review of The Reality of God and Other Essays by Schubert M. Ogden. Interpretation, XXI (October 1967), 447-59.
- Harvey, Van A. A Handbook of Theological Terms. New York: Macmillan, 1964.
- _____. "Pathos of Liberal Theology," review of David Tracy, Blessed Rage for Order. Journal of Religion, LVI, 4 (October 1976), 382-91.
- Hendrix, Harville. "Pastoral Counseling: In Search of a New Paradigm." Pastoral Psychology, XXV, 3 (Spring 1977), 157-72.
- Hiltner, Seward, and Lowell G. Colston. The Context of Pastoral Care. New York: Abingdon Press, 1961.

- _____. The Counselor in Counseling. New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1950.
- Inbody, Tyron. "Myth in Contemporary Theology: The Irreconcilable Issue," Anglican Theological Review, LVIII (April 1976), 39-57.
- Keen, Sam. To a Dancing God. New York: Harper & Row, 1970.
- _____. Voices and Visions. New York: Perennial Library, 1974.
- Lake, Frank. Clinical Theology: A Theological and Psychiatric Basis to Clinical Pastoral Care. London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1966.
- Moore, Allen J. "The Place of Scientific Models and Theological Reflection in the Practice of Ministry." Faculty lecture, School of Theology at Claremont, January 22, 1970.
- Niebuhr, H. Richard. The Purpose of the Church and Its Ministry. New York: Harper and Row, 1956.
- Niebuhr, Reinhold. Nature and Destiny of Man. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1953. 2 vols.
- Outler, Albert C. Evangelism in the Wesleyan Spirit. Nashville: Tidings, 1971.
- _____. Psychotherapy and the Christian Message. New York: Harper & Brothers, 1954.
- Oldham, J. H. Life Is Commitment. New York: Reflection Books, 1959.
- Otto, Rudolf. The Idea of the Holy. trans. by John W. Hourey. 2d. ed. London: Oxford University Press, 1950.
- Pasovac, Emil J., and Bruce M. Hartung. "An Exploration Into the Reasons People Choose a Pastoral Counselor Instead of Another Type of Psychotherapist." Journal of Pastoral Care, XXXI, 1 (March 1977), 38-456.
- Pruyser, Paul W. "The Minister as Diagnostician." Perkins Journal, XXVII (Winter 1973), 1-10.
- _____. The Minister as Diagnostician: Personal Problems in Pastoral Perspective. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1976.
- Richardson, Herbert W., and Donald R. Cutler (eds.) Transcendence. Boston: Beacon Press, 1969.

- Strunk, Orlo, Jr. "Logotherapeutic Principles in Religious Counseling." Journal of Pastoral Counseling. XI, 2 (Fall/Winter 1976-77), 61-69.
- TeSelle, Sallie McFague. Speaking in Parables: A Study in Metaphor and Theology. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975.
- Thornton, Edward E. Theology and Pastoral Counseling. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1964.
- Tillich, Paul. Systematic Theology. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951-63. 3 vols.
- . Theology of Culture, ed. by Robert C. Kimball, New York: Oxford University Press, 1959.
- Van der Post, Laurens. Patterns of Renewal. Lebanon, Pa.: Pendle Hill Pamphlets, 1962.
- Wesley, John. Wesley's Standard Sermons, ed. by Edward H. Sugden, 4th ed. London: Epworth Press, 1956. 2 vols.
- Wiggins, James B. (ed.) Religion As Story. New York: Harper and Row, 1975.

2. Psychotherapy

- Becker, Ernest. The Denial of Death. New York: Free Press, 1973.
- Erikson, Erik H. Childhood and Society. 2n ed. New York: Norton, 1963.
- Ford, Donald H., and Hugh B. Urban. Systems of Psychotherapy: A Comparative Study. New York: Wiley, 1963.
- Garfield, Sol L., and Allen E. Bergin (eds.) Handbook of Psychotherapy and Behavior Change: An Empirical Analysis. 2n ed. New York: Wiley, 1978.
- Glasser, William. Reality Therapy: A New Approach to Psychiatry. New York: Harper & Row, 1965.
- Harper, Robert A. Psychoanalysis and Psychotherapy: 36 Systems. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1959.
- Kopp, Sheldon B. If You Meet the Buddha on the Road, Kill Him!: The Pilgrimage of Psychotherapy Patients. Ben Lomond, CA: Science and Behavior Books, 1972.

- London, Perry. Modes and Morals of Psychotherapy. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1964.
- Perls, Frederick, et. al. Gestalt Therapy: Excitement and Growth in Human Personality. New York: Dell, 1951.
- Polster, Erving and Miriam. Gestalt Therapy Integrated. New York: Brunner/Mazel, 1973.
- Rank, Otto. Beyond Psychology. New York: Dover, 1941.
- _____. Will Therapy and Truth and Reality, trans. by Jessie Taft. New York: Knopf, 1950.
- Rogers, Carl R. Carl Rogers on Encounter Groups. New York: Harper & Row, 1970.
- _____. On Becoming a Person: A Therapist's View of Psychotherapy. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1961.
- Satir, Virginia. Conjoint Family Therapy. Palo Alto: Science and Behavior Books, 1967.

3. Miscellany.

- Ayer, A. J. Language, Truth and Logic. London: Gollancz, 1936.
- Copleston, Frederick. Contemporary Philosophy: Studies of Logical Positivism and Existentialism. Westminster, MD: Newman Press, 1956.
- Toulmin, Stephen. An Examination of the Place of Reason in Ethics. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1950.
- Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary. Springfield, MA: Merriam, 1976.
- Whitehead, Alfred North. Modes of Thought. New York: Macmillan, 1938.